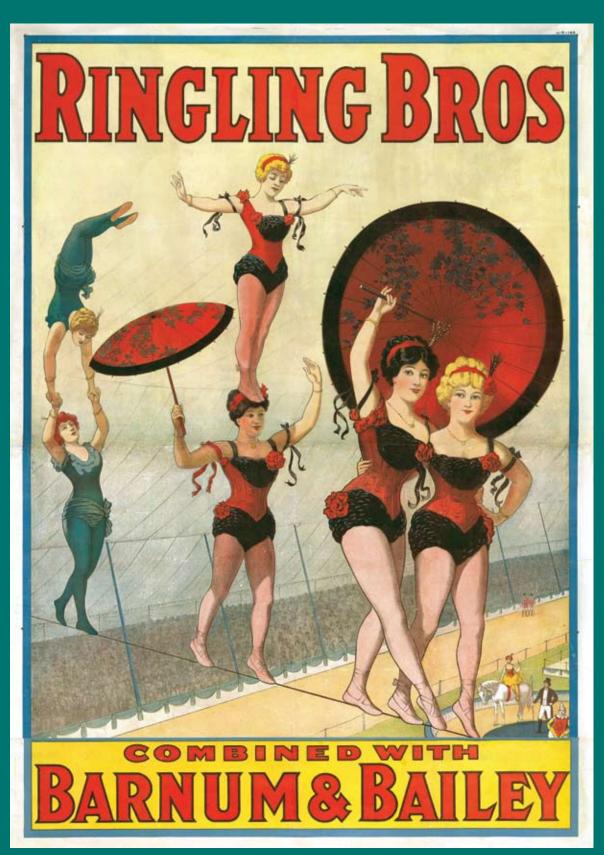
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About the covers

On the front of this issue of Bandwagon is a magnificent twosheet poster depicting a daring troupe of female wire-walking acrobats. The Strobridge Lithographing Company printed it for Ringling Bros. World's Greatest Shows in 1918. The small horizontal section with Barnum & Bailey lettering pasted to the bottom made this piece, and hundreds like it, suitable for use by the new Combined Shows in 1919. The original that measures 38½" x 55" is in the Chris Berry collection.

In keeping with the theme regarding the gigantic nature of the circus of yesterday, our back cover features a photograph of Jumbo in the specially constructed crate that would convey him across the Atlantic aboard the Assyrian Monarch. Jumbo's long-time keeper Matthew Scott (at right) and Barnum & Bailey's "Elephant Bill" Newman posed with the famous elephant on the quay at Millwall Docks before the cargo was hoisted onto the steamship. Tower Hamlets Local Library and Archive in London provided this extraordinary image.



Circus Historical Society

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Mission Statement

"To preserve, promote, and share through education the history and cultural significance of the circus and allied arts, past and present."

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The Journal of the Circus Historical Society 2019 Volume 63, Number 1

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From the Editor

Bill McCarthy and I were colleagues at Circus World Museum's Library & Research Center more than 35 years ago. While working together we became friends and shared stories about circuses we had seen in days gone by. He had about 15 years on me and often related how his grandfather had taken him to see Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey when he was a kid growing up in Fort Dodge, Iowa. That ever-moving tented circus had captivated Bill. He told of how he had seen the setup of the mammoth six-pole big top in 1946, and how he sometimes relived that glorious day by "running movies in his head." I gave Bill the nickname "Six-pole," something that he readily embraced.

One morning Bill and I were subjectively conferring about the "greatest" circus performance we had ever seen. Six-pole was talking about a Ringling-Barnum performance that he thought was particularly noteworthy. Attentively listening to the discussion was Don Francis, a lovable but sometimes cantankerous circus fan who volunteered at Cir-

cus World Museum. He had moved to Baraboo from San Francisco to spend his retirement near others who shared a special interest in the circus.

After listening for a while, Don had had enough. He broke his silence declaring – as outrageous as this sounded to Bill and me – that Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey was not a circus and its performances could not be considered. "It was too big to be a circus," he asserted. He proceeded to set forth a case for his proclamation saying no real circus ever had over 100 railroad cars or "that many performers." If you were sitting in the end of the big top, "you couldn't even see what was going on in the far end of the tent." Don was dead serious about disqualifying Ringling-Barnum because it was just too extravagant to fit his definition of a circus. Bill and I were flabbergasted.

The truth is that fans and historians will never fully agree on a perfect definition. Since the days of Astley and Ricketts, the circus has been evolving. No common denominator fits its entire 250-year history. It has been offered in buildings, outdoors and under canvas. It has been presented in station-



Robert Ringling brought back the big top of "the good old days" (as his mother, Edith Ringling, and others characterized it) after he was elected President of Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey in early 1943. The setup of the six-pole tent provided a spectacular sight in Milwaukee on September 5, 1943. Three years later, similar morning scenes inspired a young Bill McCarthy when the big show played central lowa.

Illinois State University Milner Library, Special Collections

ary locations and has traveled from town to town by horse-drawn wagons, trains, trucks and boats. It has included all kinds of animal acts, but has also at times excluded them. A few shows have even eliminated the time-honored ring. But too big to be a circus?

In the late 19th century, the physical growth of the American circus was fueled by rapid industrial development, railroad access to new population centers, and the public's thirst for entertainment during the country's westward expansion. Many large shows drew thousands to their performances on a daily basis. A part of the culture of the United States moved toward "bigger is better," and the circus certainly complied.

In this issue of Bandwagon, you will read about different aspects of just how big the American circus was in the late 19th century and early 20th century. Chris Berry tells the story of the initial season of the world's first "Super Circus," relating a wealth of long-forgotten particulars and previously unknown information. His narrative brings this 100-year old chapter of circus history to life in a riveting manner that you will find is hard to put down.

Contributing Editor, Fred Dahlinger, has provided two enlightening articles that examine physical plant details of the legendary 1919 combination. These broaden our knowledge of how the famous brothers amalgamated two show trains and two sets of parade wagons for the single, colossal new circus.

A recent exhibit at The Ringling's Circus Museum in Sarasota is brought to the pages of *Bandwagon* by its curator, Jennifer Lemmer Posey. "A Child's Dream" provides evidence of how circus posters that influenced the unbounded imaginations of children, also led to the creation of unique circus-themed toys.

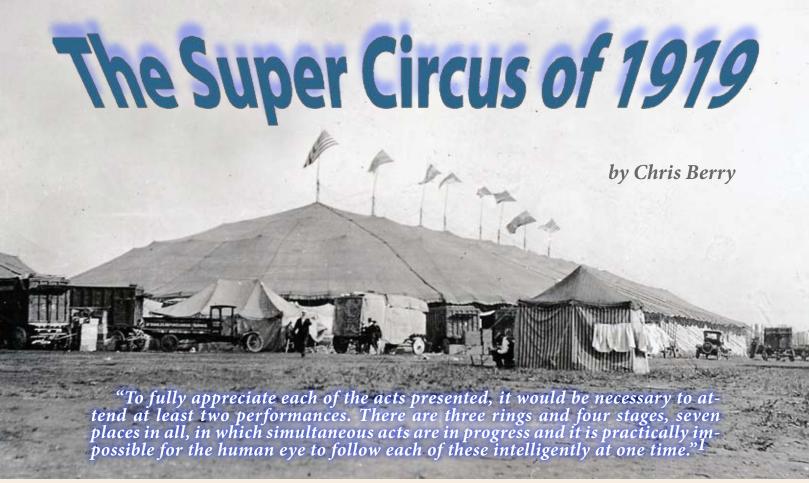
Next is William Hansard's chronicle of certain events of the 1903 season and how period accounts in route books and newspapers varied in terms of accuracy and candor. One of the highlights of William's article is his analysis of the gigantic and cumbersome nature of Barnum & Bailey during its first season back from Europe. He also calls attention to the show's struggles that were in part caused by a labor shortage and strike-like activity of workers.

When we think of the budding size and scope of the 1880s American circus, our thoughts are often drawn to three-ring big tops and the elephant P. T. Barnum and his partners brought to America in 1882. The reprint of the New York Times article about Jumbo's arrival in New York sheds light on that great animal and the hype that led to jumbo becoming an adjective for all that is big in size.

So back to that long-ago discussion in the CWM Library. Did Don Francis have a point? Bill McCarthy and I did not think so. It is too bad that one of us was not quick-witted enough to counter Don's notion by simply saying, "Perhaps Jumbo was too big to be an elephant."



It was a wintry day in early 1882 when Matthew Scott fed Jumbo treats at the London Zoo in Regent's Park. A photograph of the occasion was made into this cabinet card that was offered for sale throughout Jumbo's first season with the Barnum & London show.



Circus World Museum

"Ladies, this is the first day of the circus, and I want to have everything pleasant at the beginning of the season. There is no more Ringling. No more Barnum & Bailey. Please remember we are all members of one family now."

That announcement was made in the dressing room at Madison Square Garden on opening day of the 1919 season, and overheard by a reporter from the *New York Tribune*.² "Aunt Allie" Hartzell, had good reason to admonish the young women, as the rivalries that had been building between management of the two large shows had filtered down to the performers and working men who had been tapped to staff the new "Super Circus" that would premiere that day.

Decades later equestrienne May Wirth had vivid memories of that time, "There was great jealously because they had acts from each show in it," she recalled.³ The sentiment was echoed by aerialist Jennie Rooney, "Charles Ringling had his performers and John Ringling had his. Whoever was popular with John Ringling was not popular with Charles Ringling and John Ringling didn't like the performers that Charles hired, so there we were."

The friendly rivalry that had previously existed between the two shows became a matter of professional survival when the Barnum & Bailey trains arrived at the Bridgeport winter quarters at the close of the 1918 season, only to find that the Ringling Bros. show had already unloaded, and its managers were clearly in charge.⁵

The Billboard was effusive in describing how the Ring-

lings were blessed with two qualified department heads for each open position. Combining the two circuses meant that long-time qualified employees were now redundant and no longer needed. Some top managers were fired, and others resigned when told they would longer be heading up their department. The first to quit was Barnum & Bailey's elephant superintendent Harry Mooney, followed by his colleague, boss canvasman "Happy Jack" Snelling, who would later rejoin the show.

With rival factions forming, John Ringling was forced to make an unscheduled trip from Sarasota to Bridgeport to smooth out the growing dissention, which had even spread to Lombards, the popular saloon near the winter quarters. The owner of the nearby bar had partitioned the pub and created two entrances, one with a sign that read "Barnum & Bailey" and the other "Ringling." On either side was a bartender who would serve only those in his area.⁸

The smaller management team allowed for the immediate reduction of expenses at the top end of the payroll, and by early January the Ringlings had eliminated half of the department heads used in 1918. For the new combined show, 17 managers were picked from the Ringling circus and 12 from Barnum & Bailey. Fred Warrell, who had been general manager of Ringling, was tapped to lead the new operation, overseeing key department heads from Barnum & Bailey including treasurer Charles Hutchinson, and general superintendent Frank McIntyre.



Among the female artists on the new Super Circus were highly acclaimed performers such as Ella Bradna, Tiny Kline, Lillian Leitzel, Bird Millman, Jennie Rooney and May Wirth.

Circus World Museum

In the publicity office, Dexter Fellows, long associated with Barnum & Bailey, was among those who departed, only to return to the show late in the season. Frank Cook, the legal adjuster for Barnum & Bailey, would continue to smooth out issues for the new combined show, assisted by Ringling attorney John M. Kelley.

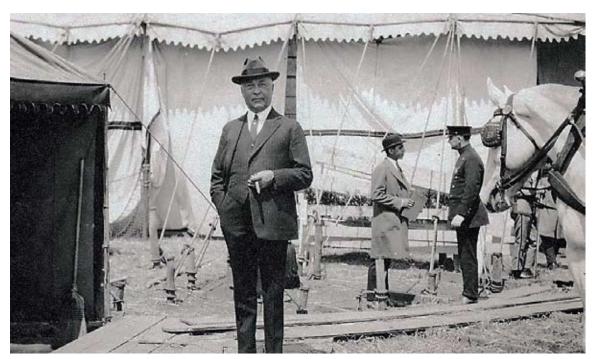
With the management team in place, the next step was to plan the performance and schedule the acts. Following the death of Al Ringling, some of those responsibilities had been picked up by Alf T., but in the winter of 1918-19 he was convalescing at his New Jersey estate, unable to help frame the new combined circus.

John Ringling realized that he would not be able to handle the job himself so he enlisted Fred Bradna to take on an expanded role. Yet despite regular meetings and long limousine rides from Manhattan to Bridgeport, Bradna said that Mister John never revealed what his actual job would be

with the new combined circus. Bradna definitely had reason to be concerned about his future, for although he was clearly favored by John Ringling, brother Charles believed that John Agee, equestrian director for the Ringling circus since 1913, was the best choice to blow the whistle that introduced each new act.

According to Bradna, the opportunity to solidify his future presented itself on a blustery day two weeks prior to the Madison Square Garden opening. While speeding from Manhattan to Bridgeport, John Ringling's chauffer was pulled over by a police officer in Rye, New York. As Bradna told the story, he immediately jumped from the car, pulled out an honorary badge given to him by the sheriff of Beaver County, Oklahoma, and asked the officer for directions. Bradna picks up the story from there:

"Ahm f'm Oklahoma, son," I said. "There's a canvasman on the circus wanted in mah state for murdah, and this



Charles Ringling was often present in the circus backyard. Many of the acts that had been with Ringling Bros. felt a strong allegiance to the well-liked circus king.

Circus World Museum

heah's Mr. John Ringling with me, to identify the felon. Mah man's been tipped ah'm coming, and ah don' want him to git away." ¹⁰

Agee, "it will work out alright."11

After an argument between the two brothers, Bradna was named equestrian director and Charles Ringling had

to tell Agee that he would not be needed for the 1919 season.12 With the decision made, Agee left for California and Bradna continued working on the program. All was going according to plan when shortly before the New York opening Bradna contracted encephalitis, an inflammation of the brain that was so severe he was not expected to survive.

The

immediately

quickly."

had

peered into the car and

nized John Ringling. The officer then turned on his siren and provided a police escort to the state line. Once the limousine was safely in Connecticut, John Ringling smiled and said, "That was clever, Fred. You think

Bradna responded, "Thinking quickly, I would like to ask about my job. Where do I stand anyway?" John Ringling told

him not to worry and

even though Charles

already hired

policeman

recog-

With Bradna on his deathbed, Charles Ringling convinced Agee to return to the show with the understanding that he, not Bradna, would be equestrian director "for as long as he wished." With an ironclad offer and a



Only days before the circus opened at Madison Square Garden, John Ringling (center) was faced with a crisis over who would be equestrian director for the combined show. John Agee (left) was given the title, and Fred Bradna (right) was named "general equestrian director." Circus World Museum

new contract, Agee returned to New York and began finalizing the program for the March 29th opening.

Meanwhile, Bradna began making a miraculous recovery, and shortly after the circus equipment arrived in New York from Bridgeport, he met with John and Charles Ringling at Madison Square Garden. During the meeting Bradna was told that although Agee was guaranteed the title of equestrian director, the combined show was so big that it also needed a "general equestrian director," a new position described as being superior to Agee. Bradna accepted the job and began overseeing rehearsals at the Garden only four days prior to the first performance.¹⁴

With veteran showmen now in key leadership positions, the only new department head was Merle Evans, an outsider hired to replace both Barnum & Bailey's bandmaster Karl King, and Johnny Richards, who had led the Ringling Bros. musicians the previous season.

Decades later Evans said he believed the table had been set for him on August 12, 1918 when he was in Sioux City, Iowa on the same day that the Ringling Bros. circus pulled into town. Although only 26-years old, Evans was already a capable veteran who had led the band for a number of touring shows, including the 101 Ranch Wild West in 1916. Evans had friends on the circus and while visiting that summer day he had a conversation with the Ringling bandmaster. Evans recalled the conversation as being brief and "frosty" and remembered Richards as being rather distant. The two

only exchanged a few words, but later that day when Evans spoke with sideshow manager Lew Graham, he was told there might be an opening for a bandleader in 1919.

Several months later while Evans was performing with Gus Hill's Minstrels at a theatre in Cincinnati, Charlie Wilson, the trainmaster for Ringling Bros., caught the show. During the conversation that day the young cornet player mentioned that if anything turned up he could be found with Brunk's Comedians out of Wichita.

Although none of the Ringlings had ever met Merle Evans, the brothers clearly had a tremendous respect for Wilson, as just before Christmas 1918, and only a few days short of Evans' 27th birthday, he received a telegram from Charles Ringling.

HAVE POSITION FOR YOU AS LEADER OF RINGLING CIRCUS BAND. REPORT AT YOUR EARLIEST CONVENIENCE.

The telegram did not specify what the pay would be, but Evans said that he was not concerned. "I knew they'd be fair with the salary. It had to be more than I was making, and it was a great honor to be band leader on the Ringling Show."¹⁵

Although we may never know for certain why the Ringlings decided to go in a new direction, Evans told biographer Gene Plowden that he believed Karl King, who had led

> the Barnum & Bailey band, had fallen out of favor with John Ringling because of the extended trips that he had taken with his new wife during the 1918 season. Evans also was told the musical arrangements that Johnny Richards had chosen for the Ringling Bros. band in 1918 did not sit well with Charles Ringling because of his use of symphony-like orchestrations rather than the brassy, fastpaced music normally associated with a circus.16

> With the leadership team in place, John and Charles Ringling approved a program that would surpass any circus performance that had ever been presented. The lineup was so strong that performers who had been headliners and center ring stars only



Merle Evans (by drummer at left), seen here with the 1919 band and others, was lauded by the New York press for creating "one of the finest combinations of musicians that Ringling has ever had."

Circus World Museum, Merle Evans scrapbook

six months before were now assigned to the end rings and stages, simply because there was a better act now destined for the center ring.

As he reflected on his 50 years leading the circus band, Merle Evans said that the 1919 performance featured the greatest array of stars ever seen on any show. "We had talent everywhere," he recalled. "A lot of it, the top performers from both big circuses." ¹⁷

From aerialists to equestrians, and acrobats to animal acts, audiences attending Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey would see a two-hour program featuring the best of the best. As the *New York Times* predicted, the "two in one show" would be "the biggest thing of its kind that New York had ever seen." ¹⁸

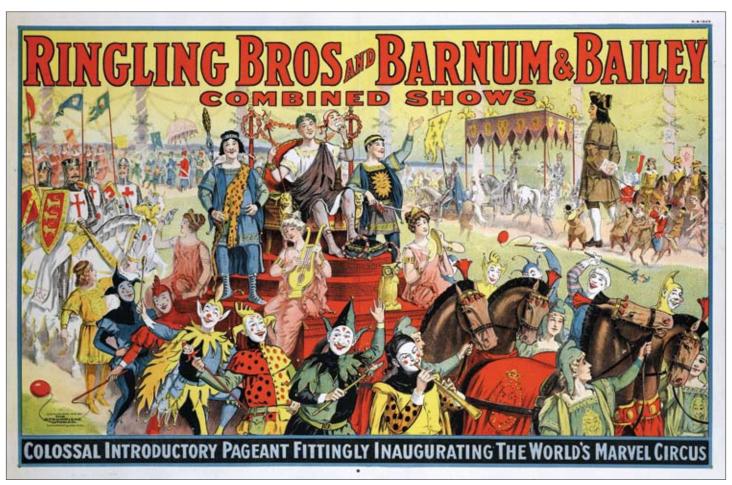
Although the circus train of 1919 typically traveled in four sections, on Sunday March 23 eleven trainloads of equipment made the 55-mile trip from Bridgeport to the Bronx where the cars were spotted at the Mott Haven yards of the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad. ¹⁹ After the first wagon was unloaded around 9:00 p.m., the caravan crossed the Willis Avenue Bridge into Manhattan and rumbled down Second Avenue to 23rd Street where the animals and wagons turned west toward Fifth Avenue and Madison Square. ²⁰

Only five days before the premiere, rehearsals began at the old Garden. The building, which had opened in 1890, was nearly 30 years old when the combined shows rolled in and it was already showing its age. Merle Evans recalled that the rehearsal space for his new band was less than ideal. "It was high up in a loft and you had to climb old narrow stairs to get there. I still don't know how we got our instruments up there."

Yet despite the trek to the rafters, John Ringling was on hand for one of the band's first rehearsals. "He listened and waited around until we took a break," said Evans, who until that day had never met any of the Ringlings. "He asked how everything was going and I said 'Fine.' I told him I thought we'd be in good shape for the opening, which we were."²¹

Less than six months after the two shows had prematurely ended their seasons, Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Combined Shows gave its inaugural performance on Saturday March 29, a day when New York was feeling the brunt of a powerful winter storm. Despite city sidewalks that were caked with ice and cold winds that howled in the streets, it was springtime inside Madison Square Garden, where an enormous crowd soaked in the smell of popcorn and sawdust.

Merle Evans recalled that opening performance, the first



In 1919, the lavish spectacles that had been a part of the circus for many seasons were replaced with a grand entry, a change from the pageants based on fairy tales or historical re-enactments.

The Ringling Museum, Tibbals Circus Collection

of three in Gardens where he would lead the circus band. "We had bright new uniforms and every member of the band sat like he was starched...I felt really important, real proud. I'd come a long way, for a country boy from Kansas."

For the grand entry of the first performance of the combined circus Evans chose a march titled "Crescent City." While waiting for his cue to start the performance he encouraged the band to, "Give it all you've got boys," and they did.²² In its review of the New York opening, *The Billboard* made special mention of both Merle Evans and the band saying, "It is without a doubt one of the finest combinations of musicians that Ringling has ever had."²³

"Greatest show I ever saw," was John Ringling's reaction to a reporter after seeing the performance, although he balked at saying which act he enjoyed the most. "Remember, I'm the boss. If I told you I liked May Wirth better than Poodles Hanneford, Poodles might quit, and May might ask for a raise. Or if I said the clowns were better than the aerialists, the flyers might accidently fall down on my neck, so I will play it safe and say every act was the best." 24

When it came to equestrian acts, Ringling was spoton. Never had such a combination of riders been together in a single performance. May Wirth and the Wirth Family featuring Phil St. Leon, along with Poodles Hanneford and his family's riding troupe, plus The Riding Davenports, the Clark brothers, Fred Derrick and Ella Bradna, The Riding Rooneys, Tony Parker and Bagonghi, "the world's smallest rider," all took their turn in the spotlight.²⁵

In its review of the performance the *New York Clipper* described the difference in the acts:

"Miss Wirth is the acknowledged queen of the equestriennes and as such is given the center ring where she has the arena all to herself. She eschews the simpler stunts of bareback riding and confines herself to feats, any of which would make a star of any other woman rider. She does many backward somersaults while riding, rides in all kinds of difficult positions, makes leap after leap from the ground to the horse's back and as a climax, with each foot fastened in a ten-inch basket, makes a flying leap to the back of her horse.

"The Hanneford Family is also accorded the entire arena while their act is being presented. They come to the circus direct from the Hippodrome, but the fact that their work has been seen by admiring thousands at New York's biggest playhouse in no way detracts from their worth, for in the arena at

the Garden, the value of their performance is enhanced many fold."

Among the other performers singled out in the review was wire walker Bird Millman, "the graceful little girl who does everything in her dance but shimmy," while accompanied by a tenor named Matt Keefe. 26

Yet despite the scolding that had been given in the ladies dressing room before the opening performance, the rivalry between the Barnum and Ringling camps was not subsiding, as aerialist Tiny Kline recalled decades later:

"Not a day passed by without some excitement, arguments over trivialities. We, the Barnum people, felt that that other



The great Australian equestrienne May Wirth accomplished twisting backward somersaults and other sensational feats, rarely, if ever, performed by other female riders.

Circus World Museum



Lillian Leitzel and Bird Millman were among those performing at Florenz Ziegfeld's Midnight Frolic during the 1918-19 winter season. Leitzel was not present during the Madison Square Garden engagement because of her commitment to Ziegfeld.

New York Morning Telegraph, December 22, 1919

gang was there by the grace of kindness from us, whereas the Ringling bunch was under the illusion that we were the poor orphans who needed adoption, letting us know it in no uncertain terms.... During the first week, the Garden was like an arsenal of explosives, where everyone trod lightly. Then, gradually, each got bolder and stood his ground, maintaining that his side was in power."

One of those noticeably absent from the performance at Madison Square Garden was Lillian Leitzel, who was wrapping up her winter engagement with Florenz Ziegfeld's *Midnight Frolic* in the Roof Garden atop the New Amsterdam Theatre in Times Square. Leitzel had been a part of Ziegfeld's revue each winter since 1917, performing nightly along with Bird Millman, singer Fanny Brice and comedian Bert Williams. When the 1919 circus season began, Leitzel was still featured at the nightclub, where she continued to perform during the entire Manhattan engagement.

Lillian Leitzel's place in circus history might have been much different had events unfolded differently during the winter of 1918-19. When the Ringling Bros. circus closed early in 1918, Ziegfeld offered Leitzel a contract of \$350 per week for 100 consecutive weeks to perform in his *Midnight Frolic*,²⁸ considerably more than the \$200 that she had been earning under her contract with Ringling.²⁹

By all indications the New York nightclub audience loved the dainty aerialist in the Ziegfeld production, but shortly after her winter engagement began an event happened that would change American history, and possibly Lillian Leitzel's career. On December 18, 1918 the U.S. Senate proposed the 18th Amendment which would prohibit the sale of alcoholic beverages from coast to coast. After approval by 36 states, the Amendment was ratified and on January 17, 1920 Prohibition became the law of the land.

Ziegfeld evidently realized that the future of his exclusive nightclub that served cocktails during a sophisticated variety performance was in jeopardy, and perhaps it was no longer prudent to put performers under contract for 100 weeks.

Documentation is sparse, but Lillian Leitzel's agreement was apparently modified. Although she would return to the *Frolic* for the 1919-20 winter season, Ziegfeld closed the revue shortly after Prohibition went into effect.

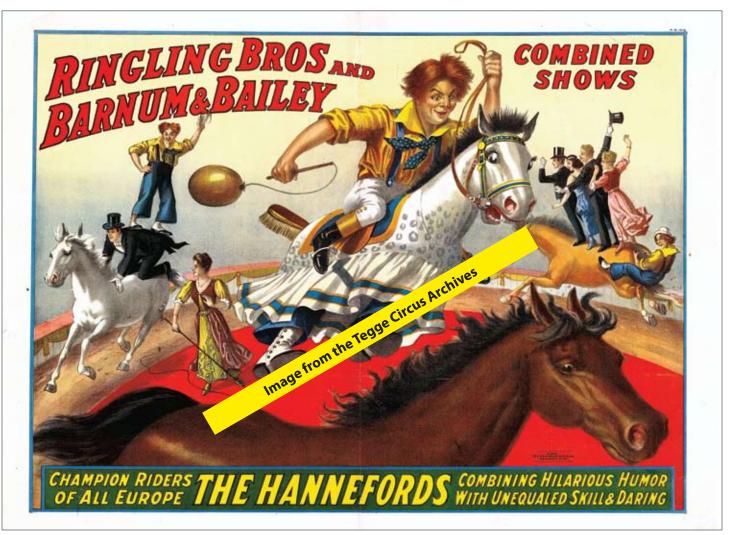
Even without Leitzel on the program, the Super Circus was a sensation. During its final week at the Garden, the *New York Times* reported that the performance had been witnessed by nearly a half-million New Yorkers.

"For the first time in its history the circus has played to standing room only at every performance, and the advance sales indicate capacity audiences for this, the final week. When the performance finally ends next Saturday night, it is the belief of the management that nearly 500,000 persons will have witnessed the spectacle." ³⁰

The population of New York City in 1919 was approximately 5.6 million people,³¹ and though it appears that the figure of 500,000 patrons was inflated, several hundred thousand did see the performance at Madison Square Garden. According to records from the 1919 season now in the Pfening Archives, during its four-week New York run, the circus generated \$383,210 in ticket sales (approximately \$5.8 million in 2019).³²

Admission to the performance at Madison Square Garden ranged from 50 cents to \$2.75,³³ and the sold-out performances quickly made the show the hottest ticket in town.

When a reporter for the Associated Press named Edward Roberts tried to buy a ticket midway through the engagement he was informed that the performance was sold out. As he and two others were leaving the Garden they were told that tickets were available across the street at the Madison Hotel. At the hotel they met with the unlicensed broker and were told that one-dollar tickets were available for \$1.50 and a \$3.00 ticket could be bought for \$4.40. The scheme was reported to police and Sam Gipps and Abe Berkowitz were arrested and charged with violating a city ordinance regulat-



The Hanneford family was one of several riding acts in the 1919 program. This lithograph was originally produced for Barnum & Bailey and was one of several reworked for the Combined Show.

Tegge Circus Archives

ing the sale of amusement tickets. Although now deprived of their income, the punishment was not overly harsh, as each of the illegal scalpers was fined \$10.00.³⁴

The success of the circus also attracted the attention of the American Federation of Musicians, which governed wages for the circus band. In early January, before Evans left Kansas, Charles Ringling sent specific instructions on the size of the band and what its members should be paid. Evans was told to hire 31 musicians at an average salary of \$19.00 a week, based on the 1918 pay scale which had ranged from \$14 to \$24 per man. More seasoned musicians would be given a higher salary, and Merle was to receive \$60.00 a week.³⁵

After the first evening performance, the musician's union approached John and Charles Ringling and demanded that everyone in the band be paid a minimum of \$25 per week. According to Evans, John Ringling was outraged, while Charles was more reasonable and began sharpening his pencil. The brothers told the union they would raise the band salary, however to stay within budget, 12 musicians would have to be immediately fired. Evans said, "[W]e dropped a dozen men right off the reel and I wound up with

four trombones, two basses, four cornets, four clarinets, a piccolo, two horns – 24 men in all. That still gave us a pretty good circus band." 36

Despite his embarrassment after being told to sack a dozen men he had just hired, Evans spirits were lifted when he began receiving positive feedback on the band's performance, most notably from John Ringling, who made his way to the bandstand after the show ended. "Young man," Ringling said to Evans, "I like the way you handle that horn. When you were in that grand entry, you damned near blew me out of my box!" As Merle retold the story more than 50 years later he reflected on that first performance of the combined circus and said, "It was one of the nicest compliments I ever had." "37

For decades Barnum & Bailey had opened its season at Madison Square Garden, yet many of those from the Ringling Bros. circus were making their first-ever appearance in New York. Even some of the veteran performers were terrified of how they might be received by the sophisticated metropolitan audience and its discriminating tastes. For most, that fear vanished with the first performance. "I've seen every spot of the United States, but I never enjoyed entertaining

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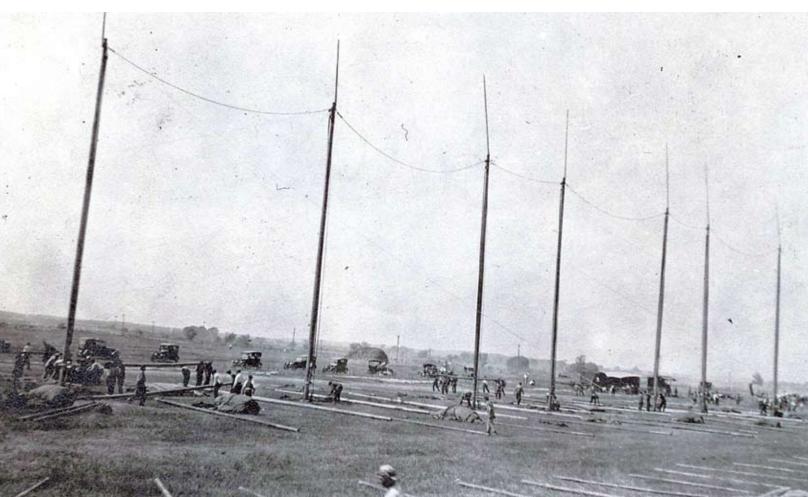
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Season opens in New York City in March. Colored talent address P. G. LOWERY, 219 Neilston Street, Columbus, Ohio. All others address LEW GRAHAM, Manager Side Shows, 905 Palace Theater Building, New York City.

(Two weeks' silence respectful negative.)

During the winter of 1918-1919, advertisements ran in The Billboard recruiting acts for the side show that was managed by Lew Graham, who also was the announcer for the big show.

Chris Berry Collection



Each morning Jim Whalen supervised an army of workers who set up the largest spread of canvas ever created for a traveling show. A straw house in the eight-pole big top could accommodate up to 16,000 people.

Circus World Museum

the people as much as I have right here," said veteran clown Al Minco, who was making his debut in New York. "I'm for Broadway from now on." 38

The New York press corps, like the New York audience, also had a reputation for being sophisticated, yet two days after the circus opened, publicity agent Wilbur Williams planned an event that generated ink in the metropolitan newspapers, just as when Tody Hamilton had pulled the same stunt on London reporters during Barnum & Bailey's tour of Europe more than 20 years earlier.

In New York, as in
London a generation
before, reporters were
alerted that sideshow
performers were "protesting" in the lobby
of the Garden, complaining about banners
cobweb." Hertight-w
on her pointed toes.
"freaks." According to

the *New York Tribune*, the scene was a "near riot" among the performers who believed the word "freaks" was a disrespectful term. The loud protest ended only after the sign was changed to read "Congress of Strange People." The resulting coverage offered the circus free space in the form of "legitimate" news rather than paid advertising.

During the four weeks the circus was at Madison Square Garden, winter transitioned to spring and exceptional weather greeted Jim Whalen and his canvasmen as they set up the enormous big top in Brooklyn. Six days before the first outdoor performance of Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey, Whalen supervised construction of the largest spread of canvas ever created for a traveling show, an eight-pole tent nearly the length of two football fields, 560 feet by 200 feet, with a capacity for 16,000 people. There were 28 other tents in the canvas city, the smallest being the circus post office, along with an expanded menagerie, sideshow and a score of other pavilions for horses, wardrobe, performers, blacksmiths, properties and a cook house that served 3,700 meals



of the Garden, com- Above, Bird Millman was described in the program as "a fairy on a plaining about banners cobweb." Hertight-wire act included a ballet dance where she balanced that described them as on her pointed toes.

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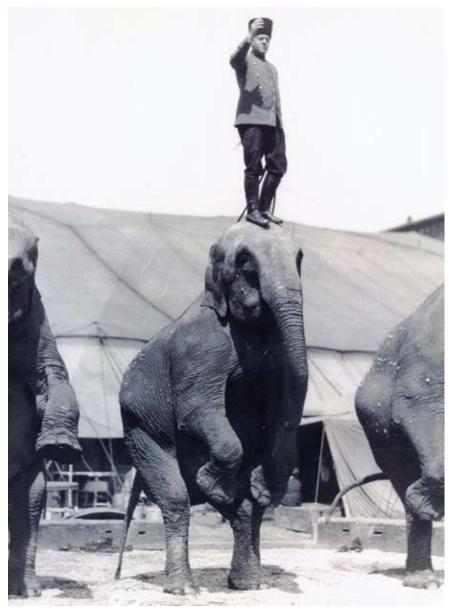
The six-day Brooklyn stand provided the first parade of the combined circus which rumbled its way through the borough as thousands lined the streets to view the procession. The parade, which featured Merle Evans and his band atop the Two Hemispheres bandwagon along with another, paid tribute to the United States military and the allied nations that had participated in the first World War. A review of the parade pointed out the popularity of the patriotic theme and reported that "the Italian float passing through the Italian quarter of the borough created a furor."42

Whether it was the street parade, or the thousands of lithographs placed in storefronts and pasted on walls, the performances – and audiences – in Brooklyn were a harbinger of things to come. On Monday April 28, Fred Bradna blew

his whistle and the under-canvas season began, featuring a center ring sensation not seen by Manhattan audiences. Lillian Leitzel was back with the show, her act singled out by the *Brooklyn Eagle* as "a clever one [that] gave the audience many thrills.⁴³

Decades later as Merle Evans wistfully looked back on that 1919 performance, he agreed. "Lillian Leitzel, who performed on Roman rings and swiveled rope, high above the center was the greatest ever." As she made her way into the center ring, the band played her favorite waltz, "The Crimson Petal," continuing until she reached the top of the tent when the musicians segued into "The William Tell Overture," when she began her six-minute act on the Roman rings. Just as the routine reached its climax, she would continue with her specialty, the "plange," where she would propel her body over and over, faster and faster to "The Flight of the Bumblebee."

Everyone seemed to have a favorite act on the show, and for May Wirth, herself a superstar performer, the highlight



George "Deafy" Denman was responsible for the combined herd of 38 elephants, the largest group of pachyderms ever exhibited to that time on an American circus.

Circus World Museum, Tom Parkinson papers

was the grace and talent of Bird Millman's performance on the tight wire. "She was a very lovely person," Wirth recalled. "She danced like a ballerina on the wire." A reviewer for the *Boston Globe* agreed, calling her "one of the most remarkable, and certainly one of the most beautiful of the many acts." The program described her as "a fairy on a cobweb," and the Boston reporter said that "she whirled, pirouetted and pointed as securely as any ballet star."

From the moment word first filtered out that the two shows would be combined, the entertainment world had eagerly waited for scraps of information about the new combined circus, and once the show was under canvas *The Bill-board* gushed in its review of the performances in Brooklyn, Philadelphia and Washington, D.C.

"Sharply at 2:15 General Equestrian Director Fred Bradna blew the whistle and the season 1919, under canvas, was underway and to the guy who knows, destined to be a banner year of all shows. At the side show entrance, Lew Graham, ably assisted by Clyde Ingalls, had a show that knocked them crazy. At the front door was Chick Bell who had assistants who said, 'thank you.'

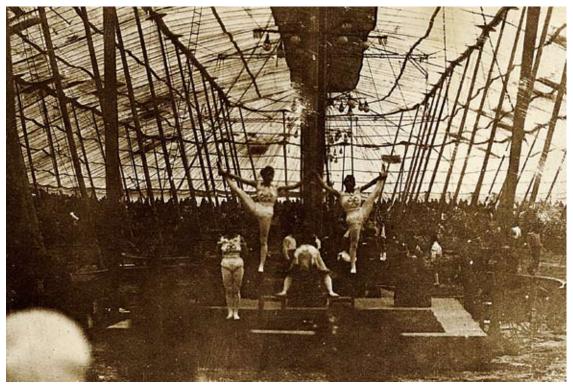
"Inside the menagerie was a stupendous collection of wild animals, elephants 38 – count 'em. No wonder they called it the first Super Circus. George Denman, the elephant trainer, has added ten pachyderms to the already large herd. At the conclusion of his act, the bulls, standing on their hind legs on the track from one end of the tent to the other, make a remarkable picture.

"Philadelphia turned out en masse for the week despite the terrible downpours of rain, which continued throughout the engagement. Bales of straw were used to accommodate the people sitting on the track. Washington business was also wonderful. Four complete turnaways with the public sitting up to the rings and stages at times. This season is the first time that President Wilson has missed the circus since taking office. The Knights of Columbus entertained about 250 soldiers at each performance in Washington [and] Government offices were all closed for one day to enable officials to see the first Super Circus."

In his notes about the Philadelphia stand, clown Herman Joseph also wrote of the cold and rainy weather and marveled at the crowds. He described how, during six performances

in Philadelphia, spectators were seated "way out to the ring curb" and mentioned that because of the enormous mob seated on hippodrome track, "the races were omitted." He also noted that when the show was in Washington "the sideshow, under the direction and management of Lew Graham, smashed all previous figures ever made by the Ringling Bros. or Barnum & Bailey shows."

The nation's capital had long been considered a good circus town, and with government offices closed so that workers could attend the big show, the response was overwhelming. The trains arrived from Philadelphia on a Sunday, and with no performances scheduled that day, the setup at 15th and H Streets NE was leisurely and impressive, as reported by *The Washington Post*:



Above, the Super Circus of 1919 included a multitude of displays that simultaneously filled the three rings and four stages. From acrobats to clowns, equestrians to aerialists, it was truly a colossal performance.

Circus World Museum

"The unpacking of a circus from its wrappings is a thing to see. Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey circus carries everything that a circus ever thought of carrying, besides a lot that was never thought of until this very year. Herds of wild animals, many of which do odd and intellectual things, almost 700 horses, 28 tents, including the big top that is 600 feet long in itself, a company of 1200 people, 300 wagons, seals capable of astounding feats and a man who skates on his head to solid earth from the apex of the big top.

"Over 400 wounded soldiers from Walter Reed, St. Elizabeth's, and the Naval hospitals will be the guests today and tomorrow at a circus party to be given by the Knights of Columbus committee on war activities." ⁵⁰

Despite a day where temperatures in the nation's capital never reached above 60 degrees, the ticket wagons were overwhelmed as reported by *The Evening Star*: "At both performances of the opening day every foot of space in the stands was taken and straw was spread on the ground for the overflow from the seats. It is estimated that 40,000 persons

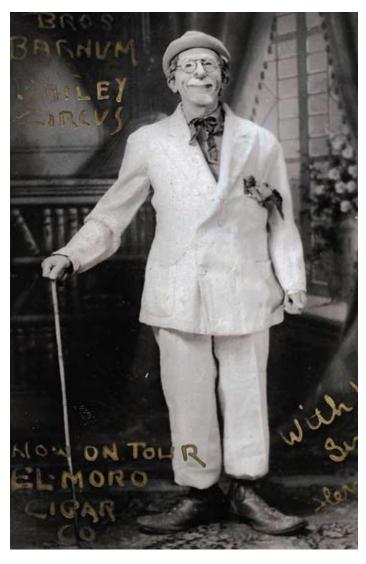
Right, there were at least 38 clowns on the 1919 circus, including Herman Joseph, who was a correspondent for The Billboard. He provided weekly updates on the personnel and activities of the big show.

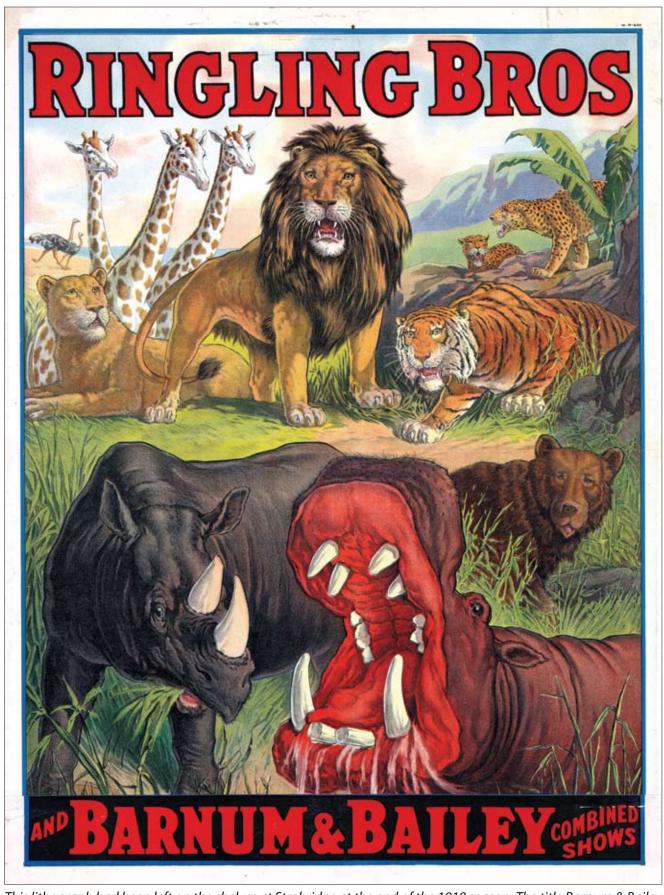
Circus World Museum

saw the big show yester-day.⁵¹

Records from the 1919 season now in the Pfening Archives confirm the immense size of the crowd. When all the receipts were tallied, May 12, the opening day in Washington, D.C., provided the biggest box office of the entire season, generating \$36,293.99 in ticket sales (about \$530,000 in 2019.)⁵²

The 400 wounded soldiers who were among the throngs attending the circus in Washington, D.C. were but a handful of World War I veterans who were treated to the





This lithograph had been left on the shelves at Strobridge at the end of the 1918 season. The title Barnum & Bailey was pasted by hand to the bottom of this and thousands of other posters, so they could be utilized by the Combined Show.

Chris Berry Collection

show less than a year after the guns had been silenced in Europe. While the circus was in New York, wounded soldiers from New Jersey's Colian Hospital were invited as John Ringling's personal guests, and during a matinee performance in late April eleven double-amputees received a standing ovation from a crowd of 8,000 as they took their seats. After the performance one of the former soldiers told a reporter he enjoyed the acrobats and clowns much more than the equestrian acts, remarking that he had seen "too many wild horses in battle to get worked up over a chariot race." ⁵⁵³

Among the clown gags that no doubt struck a chord with the audience of 1919 was a takeoff on the burning house, only this time the routine was more topical. With the audience keenly aware that the sale of alcohol would soon end as Prohibition became law, the burning house was replaced by "The Last Chance Saloon," which was raided and then set on fire by a group of clowns portraying "down with liquor" teetotaling protestors. Once the saloon was on fire, other clowns tried to put out the blaze and save those inside, along with the liquor.⁵⁴

A production of that size would require a small army of clowns, and the combined circus offered exactly that. According to Herman Joseph's notes from the Madison Square Garden opening, there were at least 38 clowns on the show in 1919,55 and among their routines was a gag that poked fun at the automobiles that were quickly replacing horses on city streets and rural highways. During the performance the clowns presented an early version of a "Pfunny Pford" act, where a fleet of Model T's had been modified to "do everything but talk." A reporter from the New York Tribune watched a rehearsal with Charles Ringling describing the scene as the cars "raced about the arena, ran forward and backward with equal ease and were as ready to go into the sections set aside for reserved seats as to remain in the sawdust oval." When the reporter asked Ringling his opinion on the act, the circus king quipped, "I've a new respect for them. I'll never drive another car!"56

The success seen at the ticket wagon was no doubt due to the tremendous promotion of the world's first Super Circus. In the days before radio and television much of the ballyhoo came from the platoon of advance men that visited each town in the weeks prior to the show's arrival, and in 1919 there were "exactly 108" men traveling ahead of the circus,⁵⁷ including billposters and the contracting agents who arranged for everything from sawdust to cookhouse provisions, most of which was purchased locally each day.

At a time when large zoos were only found in metropolitan areas, the circus offered most rural Americans their only opportunity to see unusual animals from around the world, and when the two great shows were brought together, the menageries were also combined under the supervision of John Patterson. The expanded menagerie offered the opportunity for the publicity department to promote that the show carried entire herds of animals, including a "baby section" which consisted of several lion and tiger cubs, a baby kangaroo, five baby elephants, a camel and two baby giraffes.⁵⁸

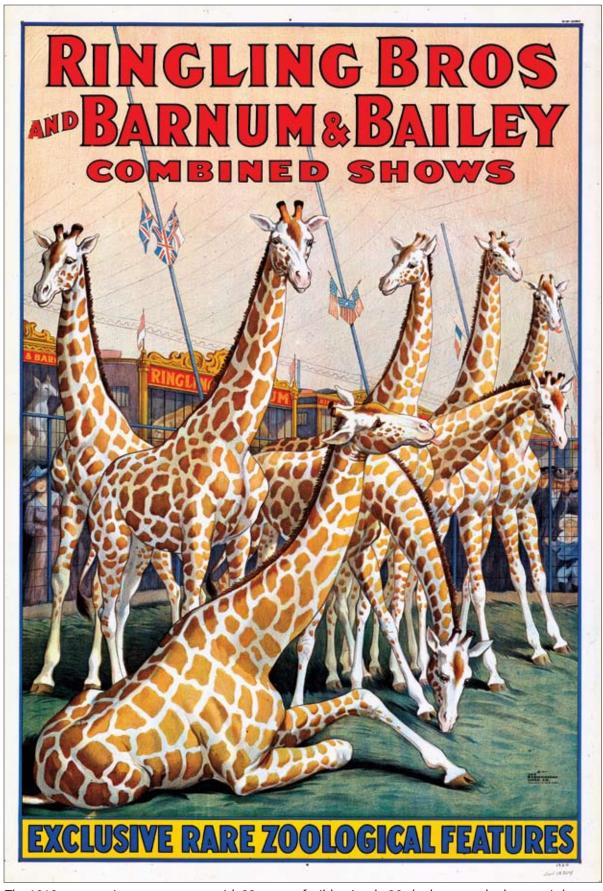
Although the menagerie contained 23 cage wagons filled with a variety of big cats, bears and even a hippo,⁵⁹ the most valuable and rarest attraction was a two-horned rhinoceros named "Old Bill" who had made his first appearance in the menagerie of the Adam Forepaugh and Sells Bros. circus of 1906, moving to Ringling Bros. in 1912, and Barnum & Bailey in 1913. Bill was a featured attraction with the combined show from 1919 until 1926, and special lithographs were created to promote his appearance in the traveling zoo.⁶⁰

The exact number of animals in the 1919 menagerie may never be known, as previous research published in *Bandwagon* and other publications differs somewhat from several newspaper reports published in 1919. In all likelihood the variance can be attributed to press agent puffery, however, there are several inconsistencies related to both the elephant herd and the number of giraffes that were carried on the combined circus.

In 1918, the Barnum & Bailey circus carried 18 elephants and Ringling Bros. carried 23, for a total of 41.⁶¹ Previous research revealed that prior to the 1919 opening, the herd was reduced to 38 following the death of two elephants at winter quarters and the sale of another to the Rockford, Illinois zoo.⁶² Despite the widely accepted roster of 38 elephants, the larger number of 41 was mentioned by both the *Boston Globe*, and the *Chicago Tribune*. Research during the preparation of this article suggests that the inflated number was likely provided by press agent Wilbur Williams, who was also quoted in the *New York Tribune* as saying there were 42 elephants in the herd,⁶³ an apparent exaggeration when compared to the known tally of 38 elephants reported by *The Billboard* in its detailed coverage of the opening performance

Determining the number of giraffes on the combined circus of 1919 is a bit more problematic for the historian a century later. Previous research supports the accepted premise that four giraffes were carried on the show in 1919,⁶⁴ however dozens of newspapers advertisements and thousands of posters promoted an extraordinary group of eight giraffes in the menagerie, six adults and two babies. Despite the belief that four giraffes were part of the Barnum & Bailey menagerie in 1918, along with another group of four on Ringling Bros., an analysis of the menagerie, wagons and train of 1919 suggests that no more than four were carried on the new combined show.⁶⁵

Throughout the early spring, the circus kept to a route that closely mirrored that which Barnum & Bailey had followed in seasons past. After long stands in Brooklyn, Philadelphia, Baltimore and Washington, the show moved into New Jersey and Pennsylvania, where disaster was narrowly avoided when sleeping car #90 caught fire in the Jersey City



The 1919 menagerie was enormous with 23 cages of wild animals, 38 elephants and other exotic beasts. Although the show's billing promoted eight adult giraffes, it appears there were actually no more than four in the menagerie.

Circus World Museum

railyards. Had it not been for the quick work of the fire department, the blaze might have spread throughout the train. Fortunately, there were no injuries and the show was not delayed. 66

As the circus moved into New England, enormous crowds continued to make their way to the ticket wagon, despite hardships such as one encountered in Lowell, Massachusetts when the show's arrival coincided with a strike by trolley car operators. With the showgrounds located several miles outside of the city, many of those who normally would have attended and taken the trolley were not able to do so. Yet despite the strike and difficulty getting to the lot, the show did big business and two performances were given with a turnaway in the evening.⁶⁷

The Greatest Show on Earth's arrival in Boston each summer was a tradition that began in 1871 when P. T. Barnum's Grand Traveling Museum, Menagerie, Caravan & Hippodrome spent six days at the city's fair grounds during its inaugural season. With the exception of the hiatus when

Barnum & Bailey was touring Europe, the circus had visited Boston annually for over 45 years. The success that Barnum & Bailey experienced in Boston may have been one of the reasons that the Ringling Bros. *World's Greatest Shows* did not venture into the city until 1895 and even then rarely returned, making only ten appearances in the 23 years prior to 1919.

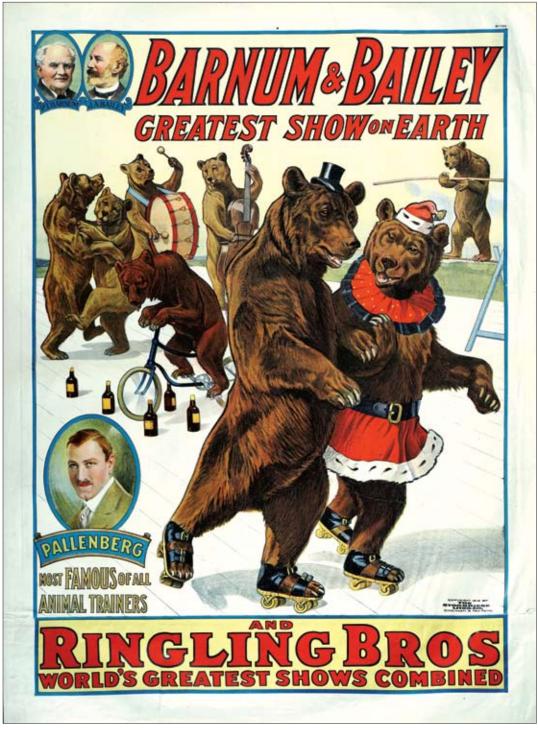
After a 200-mile jump from Albany, New York, the trains rolled into Boston on Sunday June 8. Despite a cold drizzle, a big crowd was on hand to watch the circus set up. Although the weeklong engagement began on a dreary day, the parade stepped off on time and considering the weather, business was very good. Tuesday was a beautiful day which resulted in a big matinee, and that night there was a turnaway. If Boston had been considered "Barnum Territory" in the past, the population welcomed the new combined circus, and the show reported the biggest advance sale ever experienced in the city.⁶⁸

In his notes on the Boston engagement, Herman Joseph



Thousands crammed the midway and big top in 144 different towns during the season that lasted from March until November of 1919.

Circus World Museum



One of the acts that transitioned from Barnum & Bailey to the Combined Show was Emil Pallenberg's performing bears. This lithograph had been created several years earlier, and rather than rework the title, the words Ringling Bros. were pasted to the bottom of the poster.

The Ringling Museum, Tibbals Circus Collection

mentioned the tremendous crowds, saying that "Bales and bales of straw had to be used to seat the people," adding that "quite a number of performers visited the Sells-Floto Show on Saturday while it was playing in Framingham.⁶⁹

The crowds that made their way to Boston's Huntington Avenue lot apparently were not disappointed, as the features of the new combined show were described by the *Globe* as

being presented on a "stupendous scale":

"Just remember the Ringling Bros. shows, afterward think of Barnum & Bailey's and then try to imagine what the two are like since they joined forces. You can't do it. The only way is to go up some time between now and Saturday night, when the show closes and see for yourself.

"[You] have got to see at least a dozen circuses before you are competent to judge a performance like last night's. If you were an amateur of two or three shows you were probably so overwhelmed with the immensity and lavishness of it all that you can't remember whether there were 10 or 30 elephants.

"As a matter of fact, there were 41 [sic] of the huge, good-natured beasts that all children love. There were queer, accidental looking giraffes, and delightfully vicious tigers, dozens of camels and slippery, barking seals, besides lions, monkeys, hyenas, leopards, kangaroos (a whole family of them, including the baby), a hippopotamus, a rhinoceros and a good many other fascinating creatures to be looked at and perhaps fed."70

Perhaps it was a professional jealously or maybe the fact that close-knit communities such as circuses often spread gossip, but midway through the season rumors about the future of the show and the Ringlings began flying. While none of the rumors proved to be true, it no doubt had tongues wagging in the pie car.

The first rumor to be shot down was floated while the



circus was still at Madison Square Garden. According to *Variety*, a European tour was planned in the fall after the show wrapped up its tented season in the United States. The story said that the show was booked for a six-week engagement at London's Olympia to be followed by performances at the Palais Royal in Paris.⁷¹ By early July the tale had been knocked down, with the explanation that after the Ringlings had proposed it to the management of the Olympia, it was decided that while a circus would be held there during the Christmas season, it would be "strictly of a British character and under local management."⁷²

At the same time the rumors of a European tour were cooling off, speculation began that the Ringlings would be resurrecting the Forepaugh-Sells title and putting it on the road in 1920. According to The Billboard, "several performers as well as members of the staff of the Ringling-Barnum show this season, have already been told by both Charles and John Ringling that 'in all probability there will be two shows next season." The reporter acknowledged that there was no official confirmation, stating that "...while the Ringlings, exhibiting their usual reticence, refuse to affirm or deny that they will put out two shows next year, it seems to be obvious to anyone with an ounce of show experience that with their masterly organization, the Forepaugh-Sells circus could be successfully handled without any great effort on their part."73

Finally, although there was clearly admiration for the success the Ringlings were having with their combined circus, unsubstantiated reports began circulating that because of the success they were having, John and Charles Ringling had actually made the decision to retire at the end of the 1920 season. Once the circus was back in winter quarters, *The New York Clipper* reported that, "Both are said to believe they cannot properly oversee the operation of the big outfit and they will turn it over, with the rights to use both names, to whoever will pay the price."

One thing that was undeniably true was that in the summer of 1919 Chicago would be seeing the Ringling Bros. circus for the first time ever under canvas.

It was in 1895 when the Ringling Bros. circus

Concordia, Kansas was typical of towns that exploded in population on circus day. Five years later, the same community would set a record for the most people to attend a circus performance under canvas.

Chris Berry Collection



In mid-September, the third section of the circus train derailed near Milfay, Oklahoma. At least four stock cars left the tracks injuring 75 horses, a dozen of them so badly that they had to be destroyed. The circus resumed its tour after missing only one day of performances.

Circus World Museum

first ventured into Chicago, opening the season at Tattersall's Amphitheatre. In the years that followed Chicago was usually first on the itinerary, and always presented indoors. With the new combined show opening in Madison Square Garden and touring the east coast prior to a swing through the Midwest, the Chicago date would now occur in the middle of the tented season.

Although P. T. Barnum's Grand Traveling Exposition and World's Fair had set up on the Chicago lakefront during its first performance in the city in 1872, with the exception of a benefit performance by Hagenbeck-Wallace in the summer of 1918, the open space now known as Grant Park had not hosted a circus in many years.

In late July, as the show was making its way west across West Virginia and Ohio, an arrangement was finalized that would allow the circus to set up for nine days on prime lakefront property. Because some of those in city government questioned the idea of a private enterprise using the public park to generate revenue, the show agreed to contribute 10% of all tickets sold to help fund a memorial for the city's soldiers and sailors with a guaranteed donation of \$10,000.

The city of Chicago was on edge when the show trains arrived on the morning of August 9. Officials had just quelled seven days of race riots that left 38 people dead and more than 500 injured.⁷⁸ The show offered a welcome relief to the tension, as evidenced by the throngs that made their way to the Loop for the first downtown circus parade in 20 years. A crowd estimated at 300,000 was on hand, with all other downtown traffic at a standstill.⁷⁹

Although the Chicago Coliseum had sufficient seating for the indoor performance, the building was not large enough for the combined circus that was regularly turning

away customers from a tent that had nearly double the seating capacity of the amphitheater. The potential audience under canvas made for an easy decision and the circus played to capacity throughout the engagement. A year-to-year comparison of ticket receipts in Chicago reveals that during the 16-days that the Ringling Bros. circus was at the Coliseum in 1918 it generated \$131,801. One year later, nine days of performances under canvas generated \$180,567, a 27% increase in revenue for an engagement that was seven days shorter than in 1918.

Incidentally, the show made good on its promised contribution to the Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Fund, donating \$17,000 to help create the memorial which is known today as Soldier Field Stadium, home of the Chicago Bears, and ironically the venue where Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey would set up its tents from 1935 until 1955.

Big cities like Chicago, Boston and Washington could always be counted on to deliver at the ticket wagon, but the lion's share of the season was played out in small towns such as Wichita or Concordia, Kansas where the circus provided high quality performances to a rural audience with few entertainment choices.

In its review of the circus, the *Wichita Daily Eagle* expanded on the observations made by the big city newspapers:

"The circus has been well dubbed the Super Show. Ringling Bros. Circus was more than any pair of eyes could see, and so was Barnum & Bailey. The consolidation of the two enabled the management to pick the cream of the acts.

"Not only are the performers wonderful, the



Perry George Lowery joined the Ringling organization for the 1919 tour as leader of the side show band, touring with Ringling-Barnum until 1931. Recognized as one of the best cornet players in the United States, Merle Evans lobbied the Ringling brothers to let him play in the big show band, but was turned down because of concerns over how an African-American would be accepted by some members of the audience. Lowery's career spanned more than 50 years, and it included stints with Forepaugh-Sells, Hagenbeck-Wallace and Cole Bros.

New York Public Library

menagerie intensely interesting with grand specimens of the animal world, but the costumes are bright and clean and the music – well it is worth the cost of tickets.⁸²

Not far from Wichita, in the small town of Concordia the population exploded on circus day, and even before the show arrived, residents were making plans, as reported by the *Blade-Empire* in a front-page story:

"'The restaurants won't be able to handle the business tomorrow,' said a proprietor this morning. 'Unless some of the churches or women's organizations open lunch rooms for the day, I don't know how the people will be fed.' "83"

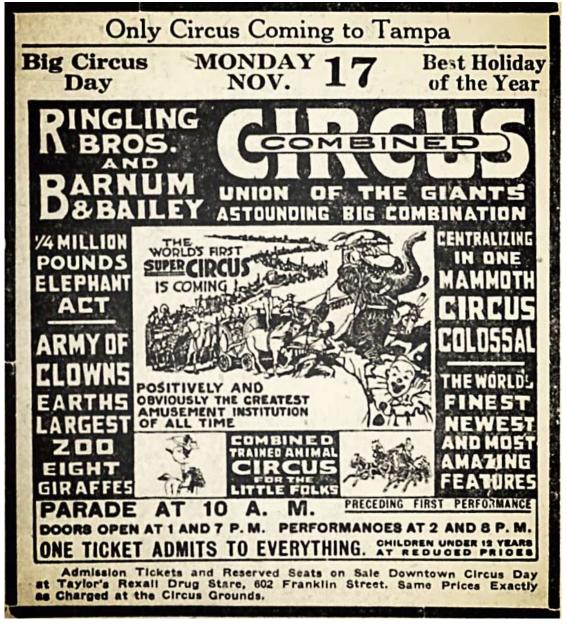
This same small Kansas community is where Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey would set an under-canvas attendance record in 1924. It was on September 13 that year that a straw-house audience of 16,702 crammed all seating and packed the hippodrome track in Concordia.⁸⁴

While enroute from Oklahoma City to Okmulgee on September 16, a major calamity was avoided when the third section of the circus train derailed while passing through Milfay, Oklahoma. At least four stock cars left the tracks injuring a brakeman and 75 horses, 12 of them so badly that they had to be destroyed. The performances in Okmulgee were lost, however, after one day the tour resumed in Tulsa on September 17.85

Although the route would take the show as far west as the Rocky Mountains, most of the 1919 tour was focused on the East, Midwest and South, with those along the Pacific Coast not getting their first look at the combined show until 1922.

Clown Herman Joseph's notes on the trip to Colorado describe a Sunday run of 454 miles from Salina, Kansas to Denver. After arriving early on the morning of September 8, the show paraded through the city to a new lot about 15 blocks from downtown where the tents were again filled to capacity. Joseph also mentioned that while in Denver, Sells-Floto owner H. H. Tammen and sportswriter Otto Floto visited, along with several other well-known showfolks including Buffalo Bill's "foster son" Johnny Baker.

If there was any animosity that existed between Fred Bradna and John Agee about sharing the role of equestrian director, it seemed to have evaporated by the time the



Despite some of the worst weather in years, enormous crowds greeted the circus when it arrived in Tampa late in the season. Both John and Charles Ringling were on hand for what was to be the second most profitable day of the tour

Chris Berry Collection

show reached the Rockies. Joseph wrote that Bradna and Agee often socialized off the lot, and while the show was in Colorado, the two equestrian directors planned to hike from the showgrounds to Pike's Peak. After learning the distance from the showground to the mountain, they hired a private car, and while they made it to the top, they were delayed on their return and nearly missed the performance.⁸⁶

As summer transitioned to fall, temperatures began to drop, and the show was routed into Texas, Louisiana, and Tennessee where tremendous rains forced the circus to cancel nine cities during the month of October.⁸⁷ On October 22, after skipping performances in both Jackson, Tennessee and Nashville, word reached the show that Alfred Theodore Ringling, the brother who had been an early press agent for

the circus, and who later wrote the scripts for elaborate specs and produced annual route books, had died at the age of 55.

Alf. Ringling had been ill since before the start of the season, but according to news reports, his death was sudden, apparently from a heart attack, at his mansion in Oak Ridge, New Jersey.88 Although his son Richard Ringling would inherit his portion of the partnership, Henry Ringling North later wrote that John and Charles never gave Richard a voice in the management of the circus, and essentially ignored him.89

The death of Alf T. Ringling apparently had little if any impact on the operation of the circus, and crowds continued to be drawn to the showgrounds like flies to honey. In Montgomery, Alabama the scene on the midway was described as "an enormous multitude of curious persons of all colors and grades, each struggling apparently more for existence than to reach the entrance... and one was fortunate if he got to the entrance without being trampled upon or squeezed nearly to death."90

Massive crowds continued to be the rule rather than the exception according to Herman Joseph who wrote, "At Richmond the show had considerable difficulty in getting up, but when the performance was underway the big eight-pole top could not accommodate the people. Charlotte provided the banner day in North Carolina as people were seated up to the ring curb."

By mid-November the tour was already one of the longest ever presented by the Ringlings, yet there was still more to come, as John and Charles Ringling routed their circus into central Florida for the first time since 1912.

If the press agents can be believed, the reason that Tampa was on the tour was because of a conversation that John Ringling had the previous winter with two Florida bankers.

Evidently, the bankers joked with Ringling that they did not believe he truly owned a circus, since they had never seen it. When challenged, Ringling reportedly said, "Everyone in Florida will see the circus if I have to give him a free ticket and transport him to the grounds." The story, printed in the *Tampa Times* three months before the circus was to arrive, added that the Ringlings were not expecting to make a profit by bringing the show to Florida, they just wanted to prove to the bankers that they truly owned a circus.⁹²

By 1919, John and Charles Ringling both had winter homes in Sarasota, and when news arrived that the new combined circus would definitely visit Tampa, the Mayor of Sarasota chartered a special train that would carry 600 of his citizens from Sarasota to the showgrounds. Ferryboats were also put into service and on Circus Day hundreds more made the drive from Sarasota to Tampa.

Although Tampa had been preparing for the show's arrival for weeks, Mother Nature was anything but cooperative. Circus Day coincided with some of the worst weather that the Gulf Coast of Florida had experienced in years. Nevertheless, thousands braved the storm for the parade, and more than 1,000 of those who made the trip from Sarasota

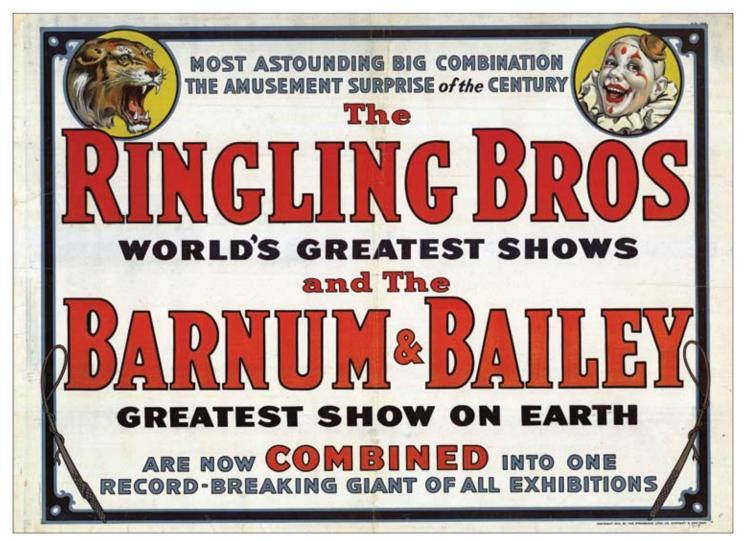
were invited to join the procession. The group gathered in the rain behind a banner that read "Sarasota – Ringling" and joined the parade after a signal from John Ringling who, "with an executive sweep of his hand," motioned them to start marching.⁹³

As John and Charles Ringling surveyed the scene, John exclaimed, "Sarasota. There is no city on earth like our hometown," to which Charles replied, "Amen." ⁹⁴

Because of the mammoth crowd in Tampa, the circus managers decided that to meet the demand three performances would have to be held, the first at 2:00 P.M., the second at 4:30 P.M. and the final show at 8:00 P.M. The payoff was beyond their expectations.

Despite the downpour, some 35,000 people attended the three performances in Tampa, 95 and when the day's receipts were tallied, it was the second biggest day of the season, generating \$35,294 in ticket sales for the three shows (\$514,000 in 2019). 96

With less than a week left in the season, the trains next moved to Orlando where observers noted that the railroad yard was filled with 134 cars, 92 from the circus and 42 cars from the Johnny J. Jones carnival that wintered in Orlando



Circus World Museum

and had arrived the day before. 97 After a matinee performance in Orlando, Jacksonville was next, followed by Waycross, Georgia, the same town where the show had closed early the previous October because of the flu epidemic, one of several factors that led to the merger of the two circuses.

Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Combined Shows ended its inaugural season in Savannah, Georgia on November 21, having visited 144 different cities.⁹⁸ From both an artistic and financial perspective, the tour was a tremendous success.

Total revenue for the 1919 season was \$3,499,959 (about \$47.5 million in 2019), a 5% increase over the \$3,311,009 earned by both shows in 1918.⁹⁹ However, that is only part of the story, as profits were no doubt significantly higher, considering the fact that the combined circus had cut expenses significantly for personnel, transportation, food and animals.

For the next 50 years *The Greatest Show on Earth* was defined by one show, melded together in 1919 through the talent, resources and reputations of Barnum & Bailey and Ringling Bros., and despite outside factors including wars, depressions and disasters, for five decades the circus was able to evolve along with America's changing entertainment appetite and options.

A half century after the Ringling brothers combined their two large circuses, a new generation of showmen, led by Irvin Feld, announced that exactly 50 years after the two operations had merged, a second unit would again take to the rails in 1969, with both shows under the banner of Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey.

The two circuses of 1969 visited 56 cities, up from 36 in 1968. New arenas that were opening across the country provided the opportunity to return to cities and towns that had not been on the route since the show moved indoors more than a decade before. The decision to start a second unit immediately began paying dividends. For the first nine months of 1969 revenues for the circus increased 40% over the same period in 1968, generating a record-breaking \$13,256,130 (\$88,900,000 in 2019), compared to \$9,493,627 the previous season when only one circus was touring. 100

To quote Shakespeare, "the wheel had come full circle." Financial circumstances that had driven the two circuses to merge in 1919 had evolved to the point where two separate shows could once again generate more revenue than one. In the coming decades, Feld Entertainment created additional circus companies, along with Las Vegas productions, ice revues and arena shows that are now estimated to generate more than \$1.3 billion in gross revenues each year.¹⁰¹

On May 21, 2017, 98 years after the debut of the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Combined Shows, in an arena only 25 miles from where John and Charles Ringling ushered in the era of the Super Circus, the longest running show in American history closed. According to chief executive officer Kenneth Feld, declining ticket sales, "coupled with high

operating costs, made the circus an unsustainable business for the company." ¹⁰²

For over a century, Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey had treated millions of Americans to a parade of the best circus performers in the world. Generations had applauded the exploits of Leitzel and Gaona, thrilled to the daring of the Wallendas and Gebel-Williams, and laughed at the antics of Jacobs, Griebling and Adler. But sadly, the words uttered by the wardrobe mistress prior to that first performance at Madison Square Garden 100 years ago now had new meaning. "There is no more Ringling. No Barnum & Bailey."

One hundred years ago an anonymous reporter wrote about what he saw at the circus on a summer day in 1919, and in doing so summed up the magic of *The Greatest Show on Earth*:

"The circus is for boys and girls and the old folks who don't ever want to grow up. The Super Circus, with its wonderful music, its tinsel, its score and ten clowns, its 35 elephants, its man-eating tigers, proud old lions, the giraffes, and the endless ballyhoo, yes even the sweat, the dust and the steaming throng, takes you away from the humdrum of life and that is the big reason the circus is, a never ending institution in American life." ¹⁰³

And that will never change. **Bw**

Acknowledgements

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Assessing the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Combined Shows 1919 Train



An 1893 Ringling tableau cage on barrels and Barnum & Bailey bull car #102 concur with the RBBB signage on the gable end of the car shops that this is the Bridgeport quarters after the combination. Stock cars from different builders, with ventilation areas filling the upper halves, can be seen between the two brick shop buildings.

The Lehigh Valley boxcar may have delivered supplies to the site.

All photos courtesy of Circus World Museum.

The Bridgeport, Connecticut, circus winter quarters, home to the Barnum show since late 1881, was inundated with equipment as never before at the end of 1918. It was chosen over Baraboo, Wisconsin, to serve as the base of operations for the announced Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Combined Shows.

As many as six advance cars and then two 83-car railroad tent circuses arrived upon the conclusion of the home runs after the last engagements of the separate Barnum & Bailey and Ringling Bros. tours. With some cars previously stored on the winter quarters tracks, and others removed from their trucks and sitting on the ground, there were between 170 and 185 on the property and parked at nearby sidings and yards. It was the greatest assembly of circus railroad cars ever aggregated around one site in American circus history.

The unprecedented number of cars underscored the challenge that lay ahead in arranging for the initial tour of Ringling-Barnum for 1919. No consolidation of that magnitude had ever been undertaken. Railroad vehicles required the greatest outlay of capital by a traveling show and the decisions to be made reflected knowledge of the investment, with an eye kept on daily movement expenses. It was also the train by which the show fulfilled the contracted route, the first step in getting the show to the people, making it strategically important.

For his envisioned triumphal return in 1903, James A. Bailey had jumped up from the 60s-car size and cracked the 70, 80 and 90 cars thresholds in one great leap. The Ringlings lagged behind in numbers, achieving the mid to high 70s by 1905. In the spring of 1910 the Ringlings had dispatched a 91-car train from the Bridgeport quarters to New York, and thence to temporary storage at Jersey City until the undercanvas tour commenced. Seven cars were trimmed off before the road train was finalized. For 1919, the Ringlings were about to ride the rails as only Bailey had done before, and not with unqualified success.

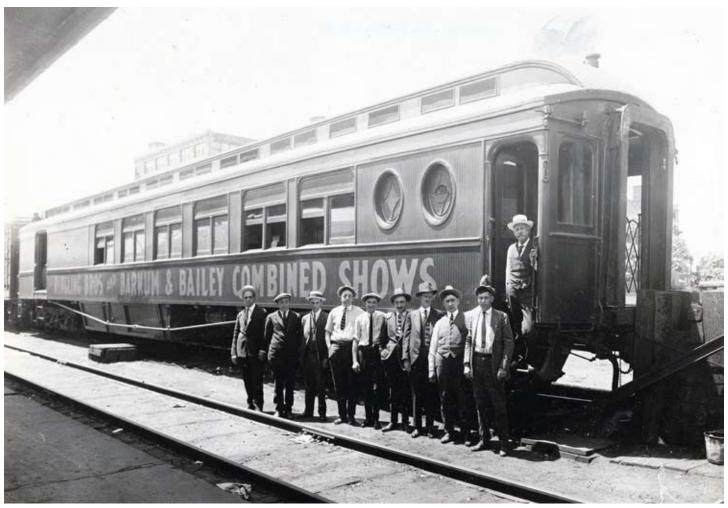
The 60-cars and larger size was a rarefied level occupied by only the Barnum and Ringling shows. They were in a class by themselves, the true whales on wheels. Most populous among larger railroad shows of the time were those with 20 to 49 cars. Just a quartet of shows had been in the 50-cars class: Great London (1880), Buffalo Bill's Wild West Combined With Pawnee Bill's Great Far East (1910-1911); Forepaugh-Sells (1904, 1911); and Hagenbeck-Wallace (1915-1917). Adam Forepaugh rolled forth on more than 60 cars in 1883-1884. Given their dominant 40-foot length, as compared to 50 and 60-foot cars on the quartet, adjusts the show train to a comparable mid-40 cars size.

Through the 1918-1919 winter, two of the three remaining Ringling brothers, Charles and John managing operations, and their merged staff, set forth a plan to create the largest circus to tour to that time. Perhaps paramount in their minds were recollections of the trials and tribulations experienced by Bailey when he inaugurated his 1903 tour on an unprecedented 92 or 93 cars, the most in use to that time. When combined with a giant tent, excessively heavy seating, a shortage of workingmen and a large street parade it was an unwieldy behemoth.

Chronically late in execution, the laborious daily operations aggravated the Barnum & Bailey relationship with the transporting railroads. The perfect storm of schedule impediments resulted in delayed and missed shows and engagements, punching holes in the season's revenues. One adjustment was the elimination of the street parade starting in 1905. It gave the show a little relief but also a lot of bad press since all other shows, including Ringling, continued the practice.



Different makes of flat cars were used in the 1919 combined shows train. Stock cars had been cut off the head end and the string of flats has been parked at the crossing, with the unloading of baggage wagons underway. Every morning, 130 wheeled vehicles had to be unloaded, taken to the lot and positioned for the day's use.



Ringling Advertising Car No. 3 of the 1910s became the No. 1 car on Ringling-Barnum in 1919. It was a wooden-framed car that had not been updated. It housed the crew, paper storage shelves and table space where lithographs were bundled for lithographer's routes.

The Ringlings and their managers faced four immediate tasks. First, the railroad cars to be used in 1919 had to be selected from amongst all those that were serviceable. The second job was to schedule and route them through the winter quarters car shop, or nearby rail car facilities, to assure that the performed repairs and maintenance would safely and assuredly facilitate the next season of travel. The third challenge was to dispose of those cars that would no longer be needed. Some were surely held in reserve, as back-ups, but likely some 60 to 70 cars were available for sale. A variety of traveling shows benefitted from the Ringling reduction, the good condition cars facilitating expansion and a delay in purchasing more expensive steel cars.

The fourth task was looking forward; Ringling-Barnum agents had to negotiate transportation contracts for the 1919 route with railroads that required them to haul the single largest circus on rails – in a timely fashion – six days a week. Moving this great show would test the limits of their logistical capabilities every day. American railroad trackage maxed out in 1916, enabling shows to reach all major concentrations of human residency.

The difficulty in managing far flung empires of steel ribbons was one reason that the railroad network went under the control of the United States Railroad Administration on December 28, 1917, and would remain so until March 1, 1920. The threat of suspended railroad movements during the war had been one factor in reducing from one giant circus to two. For 1919, only half the number of locomotives, crews and trackage would be required by the Ringling organization, putting the systems in a bit better position to assure daily movements were executed without delay.

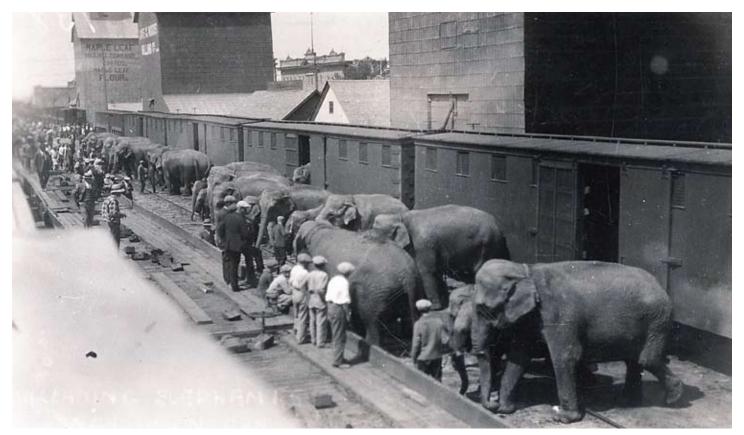
To convey the mammoth consolidated circus the 1919 RBBB show train was sized at 91 cars, with three advance cars. That was, strictly by car quantities, about ten percent more than the predecessor shows had each individually required, both rolling on 83. The tabulation in the following chart provides the 1919 consist, as well as a comparison to the two 1918 trains. Car quantities are from the John Havirland listing of show trains, which originated from transportation contracts. It specified elephant and stock cars as one number; our splits were ascertained by knowing the number of elephants on both shows and assigning 8 to a 60-foot car.

Train Consists			
	1919	1918	1918
Car type	RBBB	B&B	RB
Elephant	5	3	3
Stock, box, etc.	22	21	21
Flat	44	41	40
Sleeper, diner,			
private, etc.	20	18	19
Total	91	83	83
Advance	3	3	3

The majority of the 1919 freight cars (animal cars and flats) originated from the 1918 Barnum & Bailey train. No less than 26 Ringling cars that year were only 50-footers, meaning that the show had a significant 8% lesser loading capacity. In an additive effect, while 1919 RBBB was 10% larger than Barnum & Bailey, it was 18% bigger than 1918 Ringling, assuming that both had equivalent loading efficiency and compactness.

Car type percentages did not change substantially from the two 1918 show trains, save in bull cars, but a couple things are evident. Almost 40 elephants, the summation of both 1918 herds, were a feature of the Big One, nearly doubling the elephant cars. Horse car quantity did not drop because there was no movement towards broader truck and tractor use until later. A single truck could replace three or four eight-horse teams by tandem towing, justifying the dropping of a baggage horse car. The larger number of flats meant several things: more and/or larger tents on the lot; and additional properties and floats for the big top performance. The number of menagerie and backyard cages does not appear to have changed significantly. The incremental increase in sleepers and such suggests that the staff size in 1919 was not substantially larger than either 1918 troupe; but more star performers may have gained assigned compartment status, which lowered the number of people per car. With ticket prices not advancing, show customers got more value for their purchase than in 1918.

The elephant, stock and flat cars comprising the two circuses were of wooden framing with metal fasteners and hardware. Older 50-foot cars were still in use through 1918, but most were noted as 60-footers, the standard that shows embraced in the 1880s. They came from builders, notably Barney & Smith in Dayton, Ohio, with others constructed at the Bridgeport shops. They were maintained in excellent condition as the two big shows could not afford to have the route disrupted by simple railroad car failures like hot boxes,



Elephant cars had double-sheathed sidewalls and limited ventilation and cleanout openings to minimize drafts and retain body heat. The BTUs given off by horses allowed simpler car construction, including larger ventilation areas. These wooden conveyances served about another decade before being replaced by steel vehicles. Locals found the empty show flats a convenient and safe perch from which to study the iconic circus elephants.

draft gear pullouts or broken axles or wheels. All cars were fitted with both manual and air brakes and automatic couplers, meeting industry standards. To reduce travel expense by fielding the lowest number of cars, the Ringlings favored 60-foot cars over 50-footers for 1919.²

Show sleepers were a mixed group of wooden-framed cars that had been made redundant by newer cars built for system railroads and sleeping car operators, like Wagner and the Pullman Company. Compartment cars sometimes remained as such, with others stripped out and converted to high-density sleepers, with bunks three high and two deep on both sides of the center aisle. Some had been retrofitted with steel end frames and vestibules, in an effort to reduce the destruction inherent in rear end collisions. About half came from each of the two 1918 trains. Two-thirds of the cars were replaced in a 1923 upgrade to second-hand, but newer government unit train cars, with the rest gone over during the next decade.³

The one private car in the train was probably the *Sarasota*, an updated 1912 wooden vehicle utilized by general manager Charles Ringling. John's newer (1917) and all-steel private car *Jomar* was coupled up when he visited the show. With just one circus to announce, the advance car fleet was reduced from a half-dozen to three, a number that would decline through subsequent decades, in line with the reduction of lithographs.

With the train consist determined, another decision involved the decorative scheme. To the best of our knowledge, the general scheme of both shows in the 1910s was sus-

tained. The animal cars and flats were painted entirely yellow. Wagons were painted red, as were the passenger cars. In some seasons red and green were applied to animal car and flat car ends, respectively, but 1919-1920 photos suggest that the same color was used on the sides and the ends. The full title, Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Combined Shows, was applied to both sides of every railroad car. Car numbers were also applied on the sides and also on each end. Title and numbers appear to have been done in solid block lettering with a drop shade to the lower left. The numbering sequence for the freight cars has not been ascertained.

The first steel show freight cars, of the stock and flat car type, went into service on the Buffalo Bill's Wild West Combined With Pawnee Bill's Great Far East aggregation in 1911, and also on the Johnny J. Jones Exposition, a railroad carnival. While superior in endurance, they also cost more than wood, and initially were made an equivalent 60-feet in length. Second hand Two Bills show cars made the first allsteel circus train, Jones Bros. in 1914, but no major circus converted to new steel vehicles until 1920, when Hagenbeck-Wallace bought a train of 70-footers from Mt. Vernon, the long-time builder of wooden show cars. Sparks followed suit in 1921 and Sells-Floto was put on steel in 1922, but John Robinson was not converted until 1928. Other independent shows, Barnes, Christy and Robbins, converted in the mid-1920s as pressure mounted from the railroads. The big holdout was Ringling -Barnum, which bought one steel stock car for 1927 and then ordered an entire train of new cars from the Warren Tank Car Co. for the next season. The wooden



The last cut to load at night, the fourth section carrying staff and performers of all types, was the final one to arrive in the morning. Everyone had to make their own way from the yard or siding to the circus lot, and then back again at night. The show used a variety of wooden framed passenger cars that had been updated with safety features, but the only air conditioning came by opening the windows.

freight cars selected for use in 1919 served until that time, the last in service on any major railroad circus.

Extremely close cooperation with railroad men was paramount in keeping the big show moving on time, and one Ringling had an ace in the hole in that regard. By 1919 John Ringling had not only contracted for show movements with every major railroad in the USA, and personally rode his private cars on their tracks, but had become a branch line railroad magnate and a wheeler-dealer in second hand locomotives and cars. His personal status and national prominence gave the show a bit of a special status; his show trainmasters received great cooperation, meaning fewer delays arriving or departing, as well as timely servicing, spotting and shifting. With well-maintained cars on good trackage, the show incurred few mishaps. In the event of an accident, system cars were pressed into service until repaired show cars were received from railroad shops or quarters.

To make the shows fleet-footed, Ringling and Barnum show wagons were lighter, with lesser capacity than the brutish, heavily-loaded vehicles that would populate the American Circus Corporation outfits in the 1920s. It meant the movement of more wagons, teams, personnel and railroad cars to haul the show; but, the chances of a schedule delay owing to heavily-loaded wagons bogged down on a muddy lot were thereby lessened. The immense RBBB physical plant had been optimized to assure everyday was a winner, whereas American Circus Corporation circuses were optimized to be efficient money makers by limiting expenses.

Ringling-Barnum usually moved in four sections of 22

to 24 cars each, but could have been split into more depending upon: the ruling grades between engagements; the available head end power – the locomotives – in the division being traversed; and the ability of railroads to move, switch and spot each section. When they could not manage four cuts, the show train might be split into five, or even six sections, which caused additional managerial challenges.

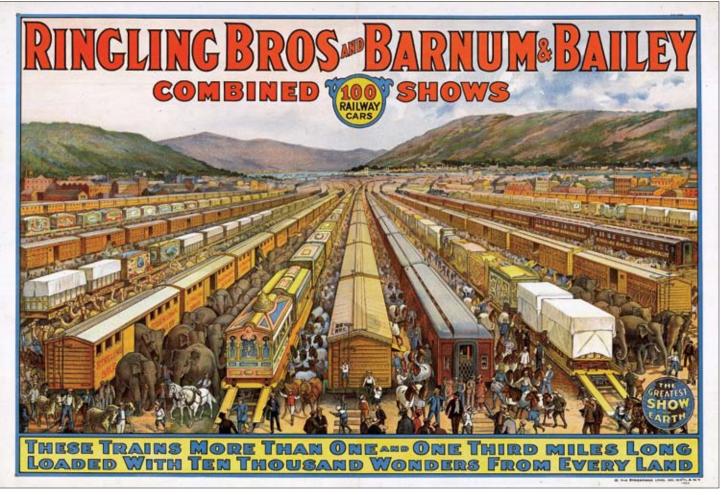
Those responsible for railroad operations preferred to have a single locomotive move a section, but there were conditions when double-heading was necessary, usually in mountainous territory. In rare instances, a helper engine, at the end or in the midst of a section, would help to move a section over particularly difficult terrain. These conditions were usually encountered in the West, and on occasion in the Alleghenies.

Coal-fired steam locomotives were still the principal railroad motive power. About a dozen mainlines, in mountainous and highly populated corridors, or going through tunnels or where smoke abatement was underway, were electrified in the 1900s to 1920s and trains were pulled along them by powerful electric locomotives. They did not issue sparks from the stack, which were an ever-present danger to start fires in stock cars, canvas wagon covers and sleeping car bedding. Their noxious exhaust also compelled all windows to be closed whenever the section passed through a tunnel. Diesel electrics were another two to three decades ahead.

As the daily operational efficiency of the "Big One" progressed and the show prospered, expansion was commenced.



Two free shows, the ritualistic unloading of the train and the passage of the street parade, kicked off circus day in most communities and attracted crowds of onlookers. The Ringling-Barnum steam calliope has just been unloaded and a baggage wagon is rolling down the runs. Show stock cars were spotted to the right of this crossing.



The colossal breadth, excitement and color attendant to the arrival of a 100-car railroad tent circus was glamorously captured in the one sheet lithograph issued by Ringling-Barnum in 1923. It heralded the achievement of that landmark size, never equaled by any other single show. Like in other posters, the Strobridge artist time-compressed multiple elements, stacking the arrival and unloading of multiple train sections into one simultaneous event.

The pinnacle in train size, 100 cars, including three advance cars, was achieved by 1922. A splendidly composed 1923 lithograph, portraying the entire, mammoth RBBB train being unloaded at one time in a great train yard, declared that it was one and a third miles long. A totaling of all 100 cars, plus the coupling distance between them, augmented with the lengths of locomotives and cabooses at the ends, points to the conclusion that the claimed length was on the mark. Nothing else came close to that dimension and it was not breached until the 1940s, when postwar, disposable incomeswelled audiences supported a biggest-ever, 107-cars RBBB show, with nearly all railroad conveyances no less than ten feet longer than they had been circa 1920.

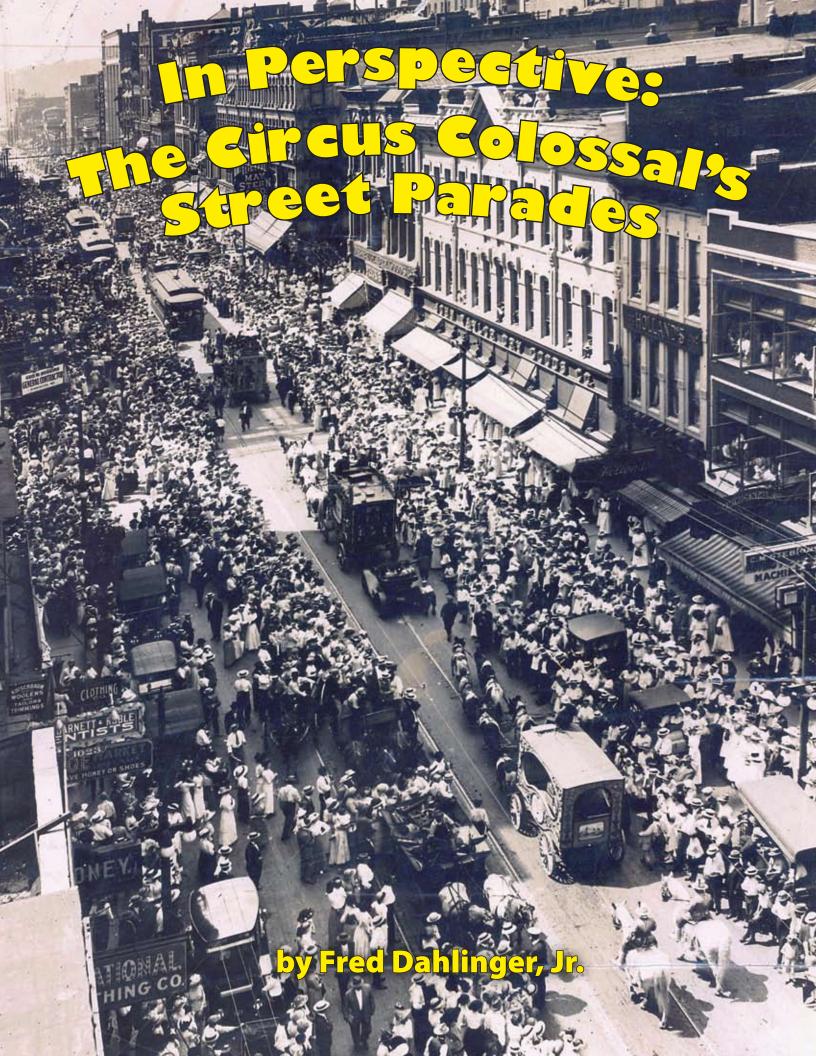
An unknown scribe, or group of them, had coined the trademark "Greatest Show on Earth" for the 1872 Barnum show tour, elevating it above all of the other "Great Show" subtitle descriptors that had preceded it in the mid-19th century. Barnum & London and then Barnum & Bailey comfortably, and sometimes questionably, wore the mantle through 1918, but it seems that the formation of the Combined Shows in 1919 gave just that much more justification to the validity of the claim. The three advance cars and the four big sections of the mid-1920s RBBB show train repeat-

ed the new brand's familiar claim 103 times to viewers positioned trackside, confirming that it was, indeed, the Greatest Show on Earth.

Fred D. Pfening III kindly read an earlier version of this monograph and provided significant feedback, which was incorporated. $\boxed{\mathbf{Bw}}$

Endnotes

- 1. The largest tent circus per se was the combined shows staged by the joining of the Barnum and Forepaugh circuses at Philadelphia in 1886. They used the largest big top erected to that time and had more acts than any other enterprise ever. It was reported as a 212 or 214 round with five 55-foot middles that made it 487 to 489 feet long. It covered between 93,600 and 94,800 square feet, exceeded only when the 91,400 square foot footprint of the RBBB big top of the 1920s was extended during selected engagements with two additional 30-foot middles to cover 103,400 square feet. The 1886 operation never toured, coming together only for the one special engagement. See the author's "The American Circus Tent" in Susan Weber et al, *The American Circus* (2012), pp. 200-231.
- 2. See the author's "The Development of the Railroad Circus," Part Four, *Bandwagon*, May-June 1984, pp. 29-36, and also *Trains of the Circus* 1872-1956 (2000).
- 3. The best coverage on the Ringling-Barnum passenger cars is Robert S. MacDougall, "Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Coach History 1919-1946," *Bandwagon*, Jan.-Feb. 2002, pp. 3-19.





Preceding page, Main Street near 11th in Kansas City, Missouri, was mobbed on July 21, 1913, when the Ringling parade navigated obstacles that included automobiles and street cars.

Circus World Museum

Left, two tremendous telescoping tableaus, one featuring an elevated elephant, were the twin peaks of the 1870s Howes Great London and subsequent Cooper & Bailey parades.

The Ringling Museum, Tibbals Circus Collection

Part I

A New York City debutante named Bertha, looking forward to her debut in the spring of 1919, faced a significant challenge. An over-abundance of jewelry, precious gems in gold and silver settings, were offered to enhance her beauty when she stepped forward to establish her presence in society. Diamonds, rubies, sapphires and emeralds beckoned her eyes, as her mind considered the heritage of those who had commissioned and worn them, and whose hands had fashioned each. The ones she chose would become part of her story, her image, her identity, by which her future would receive an inauguration.

Our imaginary debutante was actually a circus, one affectionately known as "Big Bertha." The jewelry conundrum was the challenge faced by the Ringling brothers when during the winter of 1918 they surveyed the greatest array of parade wagons ever assembled, parked at their Bridgeport winter quarters. They had to determine which of their gilt, metal-leafed and decoratively painted rolling gems would establish the brand of the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Combined Shows, the newest flag bearer of the Greatest Show on Earth trademark. It was "The Circus Colossal," as they declared on the season's program cover.

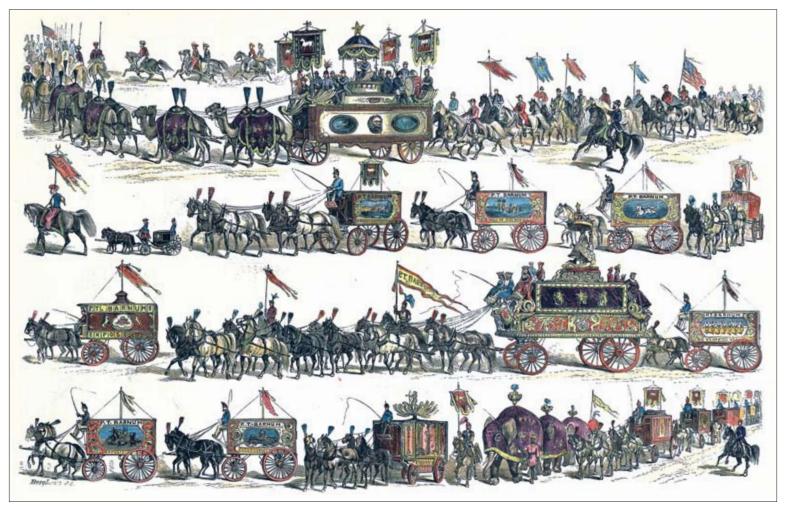
Behind the mammoth title was a lot of history, of circus operations, proprietors and the parades that they caused to roll through America's streets. A review of the giant circus processions that transpired before 1919 provides context for what happened that year.

19th Century Parades

Antebellum street processions presented by traveling menageries and circuses had a ritual existence. In their most advanced form, they included varying assemblies of these elements: entry announced by a mounted bugler; the proprietor's personal carriage; a decorated bandwagon with a band of musicians, pulled by a long team; carriages and omnibuses conveying members of the troupe; the ticket wagon; animal cages and walking beasts; and the show's baggage wagons. The entire physical plant of the concern rolled before the local citizens upon arrival in the community. Only later were parades originated on the lot.

The street processions of the 1864 Howes European, 1871 Howes Great London and 1873 Barnum shows amplified the splendor, diversity and duration of parades. They expanded: dimensionally, in length and height; in the number of novel wheeled attractions; and added more horses, exotic animals and people. Box body and telescoping tableaus, of domestic and foreign construction, covered in gold leaf, shined resplendently on blazing summer days, dazzling onlookers. Mounted musical groups, chimes of bells, mechanical organs and steam calliopes broadened the audio experience.

Empowered by men of vision, with access to capital, the circus business grew in step with the expansion of America's economy and population. Partnerships, mergers and combinations have a long and profound importance in American field show history, reaching a pinnacle in the 1919 merger. These joint efforts, whether the symbiotic partnership of a ring performer with a businessman, brothers, or a coming



The 1871 Barnum parade was filled with color and action, animals, humans, vehicles with rotating parts and automaton mechanisms, and fluttering banners, all to be augmented with a steam calliope two years later.

The Ringling Museum, Tibbals Circus Collection

together of capital resources to facilitate a stronger enterprise, had a resultant positive impact on the content and presentation of street parades.

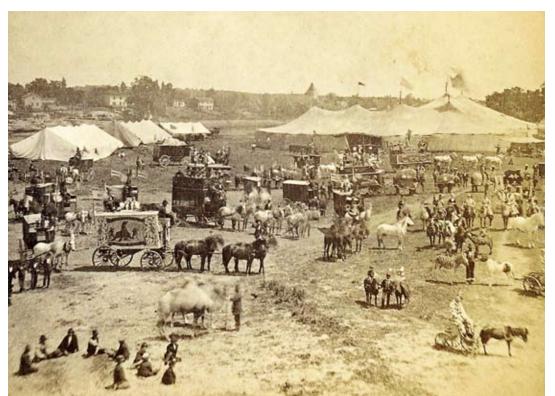
Americans first saw a truly colossal circus parade as the outcome of a temporary partnering of two circuses in the Centennial year of 1876. Cooper & Bailey and Howes Great London wintered together on the St. Louis fair grounds and to open the season staged a combined circus performance over six days. As a prelude, they consolidated their chariots and other attractions and put a conjoined parade through the streets on April 17. For the first time, a circus procession included multiple bandwagons and tableaus, a pair of telescoping tableaus, floats, numerous open and closed cages and a steam calliope. Accounts of the event, featuring ten pachyderms, describe it as being two miles long and "pronounced by all to be one of the finest street pageants ever seen in this country."

The extent of the display can be envisioned by consulting visually accurate documents. Special Howes posters and heralds of the 1870s illustrated their extraordinary gilded fleet. The photograph taken of the entire Cooper & Bailey parade on the lot at Ottawa, Illinois, on June 5, 1876 confirms the attractions in it. Cooper and Bailey later acquired

the Howes show and re-branded itself as the Great London in 1879 and for 1880 commissioned an extraordinary lithograph that essentially documents what St. Louis residents enjoyed in 1876.²

The baby elephant-invigorated Great London combined with a principal competitor, Adam Forepaugh, to open the 1880 season. Triggered by both outfits wintering in Philadelphia, they slated a two-week opening date starting on April 12, 1880. On the evening of Saturday, April 10, a "grand calcium light procession of the combined shows" coursed through the city thoroughfares. Forepaugh's route book magnanimously reported it

"...was an event long to be remembered in the history of the American Arena. Probably no more brilliant spectacle of the kind was ever witnessed in this country, or is it likely that so much value in show property was ever seen in line at the same time, no less than 22 elephants appearing. Calcium lights, fireworks and hundreds of torches added splendor to the scene, and the thousands that packed the streets was one of the greatest concourses of people ever drawn out in the Quaker City."



The earliest known photograph of an entire circus parade documented the Cooper & Bailey line-up at Ottawa, Illinois on June 5, 1876. Fred Dahlinger, Jr. Collection

The Great London route book took a partisan tone. "Of course, the Great London furnished the most attractive features, and whatever was done by its managers received the sanction of those of the Aggregation, who simply said, 'Same on our side,' and let it go."

No accurate record of the assembled Forepaugh and Great London assets has been found, but it was advertised to include: 30 chariots plus 120 vans and dens; 600 horses and 100 ponies; 40 exotic animals; six silver cornet bands, 28 Jubilee Singers, 12 Highland bagpipers and a pair of drum corps; and three steam pianos. Every living and inanimate asset of the two shows must have been ordered into the streets. The promised 30 elephants turned out to be only 22; a similar ratio, 2/3s, might bring a bit of reality to the other proclaimed counts. Regardless, it was a stupendous parade in all regards, one of the greatest ever.³

Merger, Competition and Acquisition

When the Great London and Barnum circuses were combined in the winter of 1880, partners James A. Bailey, James L. Hutchinson and P. T. Barnum faced the challenge of merging their two enterprises on the very same Bridgeport real estate that the Ringling brothers would confront their own consolidation puzzle nearly 40 years later. With both 1880 shows rolling on about 50 railroad cars, half of which were flats loaded with three or four wagons each, the estimated 150 to 180 wagons was the largest such gathering to that time.

Their builders included the best in New York City, Fielding and Sebastian, as well as others made elsewhere. There

were wagons that dated to as early as 1864, with others only a year or two old. Barnum's holdings likely included pieces from his several 1870s partnerships with W. C. Coup, Dan Castello, Pardon A. Older and a trio of showmen colloquially known as the "Flatfoots." Those of Bailey were principally the magnificent chariots that were the flash of the 1871 Howes Great London parade, as well as others that filled out the 1879 and 1880 Great London marches. The vehicles were depicted in arrays of lithographs printed by H. A. Thomas in 1876 and Strobridge in 1880.

The big story of 1881 was the clash of the new Barnum & London giant versus the Adam Forepaugh titan, with the W. C. Coup rail show getting honorable mention.⁴ The magnificent parades

staged by the two larger outfits, each self-proclaimed as unequalled, were the first swords crossed in a season-long battle. Forepaugh's agents carefully noted the consist of the initial Barnum show procession on March 26, 1881. Under a rat bill heading of "A Bubble Pricked," they blasted the deficiencies as compared to the advertised content. The Barnum show re-paid the favor when their scribes reported on Forepaugh's April 5 march in Baltimore, using a rat bill titled "Just Retribution."

Regardless of the mutual criticisms, Americans had witnessed a new era in individual circus daily parade sumptuousness that excelled beyond anything seen in the 1870s or before. The merits of their respective street parades were part of the real time brand war taking place as the American circus business embarked on golden age of quantity, quality and splendor. To the public they were equivalent processions, with actual parity achieved when Forepaugh added a second extremely tall tableau for 1882. Through the 1880s the two juggernauts went toe to toe on advertising, parade, tent and performance competitions, with a decided draw the outcome. One had a wider pavilion whereas the other had one that was longer; and so, it went.

The publicly-expressed animosities of 1881 were briefly subdued by an 1882-1883 routing agreement, but broke out into warfare again in the 1884 white elephant year. They were calmed again by an enduring non-compete agreement signed in 1886. Relations morphed into mutual cooperation that yielded combined Barnum-Forepaugh presentations near the beginnings of the 1886 and 1887 seasons. Bailey was not a Barnum show owner at the time, former partners

Barnum and Hutchinson being joined by James E. Cooper and W. W. Cole in 1886 and 1887.

The 1886 Barnum show opened in Madison Square Garden for three weeks, rain delaying a planned March 27 opening until April 1, after a torchlight parade was mustered out on March 31. It was solely a Barnum show procession. Philadelphia was Forepaugh's opener and the site of the 1886 combined operation, April 26 to May 1, under canvas, using an immense pavilion. The physical plant of both shows were present and parade elements were conjoined in the street demonstration on opening day. The Barnum & London route book related that the march was "headed by

the Barnum folks," suggesting that the two shows may have paraded consecutively, in normal order. The enthusiasm expressed after the 1880 joint march was not evident in 1886.

The second combined opener was an indoor event presented in Madison Square Garden, March 14 to April 23, 1887. Forepaugh dispatched an "indoor" train to support the show, along with parade equipment. The torchlight parade on the evening of March 14 was termed "The Biggest Parade Ever Known." Given the enhancements to both circuses through the 1880s, it may well have been true. It was timed to take a half hour to pass a single point, which appears to be an accurate assessment.⁶

After Forepaugh's early 1890 passing, Bailey and partners acquired his show, absorbing the mixture of vehicles that had rolled under Old Adam's banner and others he had acquired. A Forepaugh bandchariot and a tableau were transferred over to the newly re-organized Buffalo Bill's Wild West in 1895, but the rest remained at Bailey's disposal. Bailey then partnered with three Sells brothers and others to field Forepaugh-Sells in 1896, thereby bringing both of those fleets into his domain. The bottom tableau portions of the two great 1871 Howes telescoping tableaus were transferred to the new partnership, along with cages.

Bailey optimized his street parade in the 1890s, eliminating nearly all unusual animal hitches, marching units and others that might interrupt the planned schedule for



Adam Forepaugh featured two giant tableaus starting in 1882, his Car of the Seasons drawn by a team of elephants harnessed in tandem.

The Ringling Museum, Tibbals Circus Collection

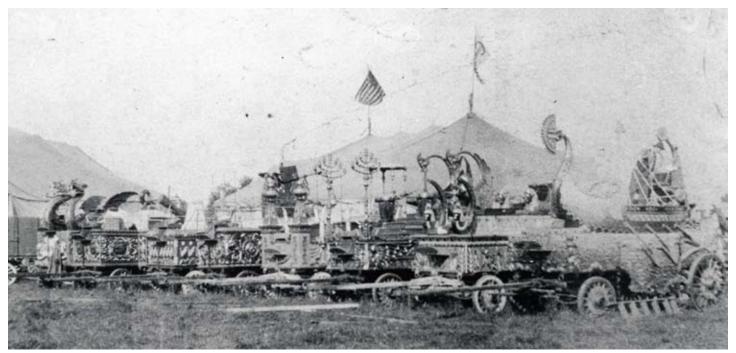
the street demonstration. A four hitch of zebras on a pony float remained in place. His one new feature was origination of the 40 bay Percheron team to draw the lead bandwagon. Commissioned in 1897 to give it a year's practice before going to Europe, the horse display was a gambit to set Barnum & Bailey above other British showmen, who had staged an undeclared competition for the "largest" hitch several decades earlier.

The first decade of the 20th century was one of upheaval, owing to physical plant missteps by Bailey with his 1903 return and his untimely passing in early 1906. These events transpired against a backdrop of proliferating competition from alternative entertainments such as amusement parks, carnivals, film theaters and vaudeville, as well as personal recreation including professional sports and physical culture.

Upstarts from Baraboo

Election year 1884 marked the commencement of the Ringling brothers circus operation. They rose incredibly fast and by the turn of the century had surpassed all others to equal James A. Bailey's Greatest Show on Earth.

The season of 1903, with the Barnum & Bailey return from Europe and Ringling more efficiently matching it nearly action for action, initiated the last two decades of the greatest circus parades seen in North America. What few



Eight of the 13 wagons built for the 1903 Barnum & Bailey show were lined up for this photo, with only the big bandwagon and the four continental tableaus absent.

Circus World Museum

knew was that the two shows had signed a comprehensive non-compete agreement that governed many of their operational decisions. The management necessitated by the operation of two major railroad tent circuses that toured the breadth of the USA was never ending. Tending to the parades was one small aspect of these massive responsibilities. Hands-on management characterized both the Ringling and Bailey approaches to operations.

Competition in parades between the two camps lasted only through 1904. To protect the money-making aspects of his business that were threatened by an inability to routinely make daily schedules, Bailey dropped parades for 1905. The Ringlings were obligated to assess the practice, but retained the traditional daily passage. It garnered as much favorable press as did Bailey negative feedback on his lack of a street demonstration. The Baraboo boys played hardball despite the Bailey-signed agreement.

The brothers had taken a flyer and leased the venerable John Robinson Ten Big Shows for 1898, but had no further second show interests until Bailey approached them to become his partners in Forepaugh-Sells. Bailey had desired his brother-in-law to fill the role, but when Joseph T. McCaddon went off on his own he had few options than to commence a partnership with the Ringlings in January 1905. That circus continued to show in the streets, but Barnum & Bailey made no processions through 1907.

Bailey's April 11, 1906, passing shook the circus world and together with the subsequent financial panic that erupted the next year made 1907 one of the most stressful seasons in field show history. The only quick resolution of what would happen was the Ringling purchase of Mrs. Bailey's

interest in Forepaugh-Sells in mid-1906. The negotiation for Bailey's remaining interests and those of Barnum & Bailey, Ltd. stockholders dragged out much longer, over a year.

The Ringlings ultimately emerged in the autumn of 1907 as proprietors of the greatest circus operation to that time. They possessed: the three largest circuses, their own World's Greatest Shows, the Greatest Show on Earth (including rights to the title), and Forepaugh-Sells Enormous Shows United; the physical plant and a symbiotic contract with William F. Cody to operate Buffalo Bill's Wild West; a lease on the Bridgeport quarters property and an outright ownership of quarters in Baraboo, Wisconsin and Columbus, Ohio; a leasehold on Madison Square Garden; and circus-related assets in England.

A Re-start in 1908

As the self-crowned "Circus Kings of the World," the five Ringling brothers occupied the pinnacle of the circus trade, surpassing even James A. Bailey's achievements. They had not had to take on debt for many years, but did so to acquire the Barnum show, for which they had paid \$510,000, including rights to the title. They moved very fast to rationalize their expanded empire.

The Ringlings closed Forepaugh-Sells after the 1907 tour and strategically split the show to resolve physical plant shortcomings with Barnum & Bailey, shipping the excess to Baraboo. The two largest tableaus on the show, the 1902-built Spain and Columbia, inspired by the opponents in the Spanish-American War, were transferred to the Bridgeport show to both boost the parade quality and increase baggage storage. Tableau cages were also infused into the Barnum



A grand 24 Percheron team attached to the Swan bandwagon led Ringling Bros. parades from 1904 through 1910. It filled the street, as seen here at Oneonta, New York on July 22, 1905.

Circus World Museum

& Bailey menagerie and parade, facilitating elimination of undecorated cages with many miles on them.

In 1908, after a single year of collaborating with Cody, the Wild West property and contract were sold advantageously to Pawnee Bill. The show was prepared for the 1909 season at Bridgeport, completing the Ringling obligations to Gordon W. Lillie. No parade wagons left quarters on the Two Bills show train.

Copying their own play book, for 1908 the Ringlings immediately re-instituted the daily march on Barnum & Bailey and created a second 24-horse team to pull the Two Hemispheres bandwagon. A couple of the expensive tableaus from 1903 as well as others of older vintage and Forepaugh-Sells origin were discarded and sold off.

Veteran elephant trainer and circus chronicler William H. Woodcock, Sr. witnessed the Ringling parade the following year. He memorized the entire order and supplied it in March 1941 to his friend and correspondent, Gordon M.

Potter. Of it he wrote "Parade as listed by unbiased spectator, Philadelphia, Pa., May 3, 1909. It is doubtful if the dingdong brothers ever had a bigger, finer, or more novel street procession, than this one." While Woodcock was on mark about the splendor, the 45 entries and four Roman chariots were consistently surpassed by both Ringling and also Barnum & Bailey parades of the 1910s. He apparently did not see or learn about them from others.

The debt incurred to buy the Barnum show was satisfied in two years and that set the stage for Al Ringling to fulfill two life-long ambitions. His first was to blow the whistle opening the Ringling show in Madison Square Garden, accomplished on March 25, 1909. The second was to manage a circus as he saw fit, which materialized as the revived Forepaugh-Sells at Springfield, Ohio, on April 23, 1910. It was assembled in Baraboo, with veteran vehicles from there and Bridgeport, as well as new wagons from the Moeller brothers shop.

Otto Ringling's passing on March 31, 1911, was a great loss, and upon evaluating their options the brothers decided upon a plan to operate only two great shows starting in 1912. Al's two-year old favorite got axed. A bandwagon, three tableaus, three pony floats and cage wagons from Forepaugh-Sells were transferred onto Ringling. Most of the excess was sold off piecemeal.

This series of events set the stage for the succeeding years leading up to the 1919 merger. Al and Charles partnered to manage the Ringling outfit. Henry and a hired general manager guided the Barnum show, while John looked over their shoulders and routed both shows. Alf T. fitted in on a variety of duties.

A Decade of Improvements and Simplification

In the eleven years of 1908 to 1918 inclusive, spanning from the aftermath of the Panic of 1907 to the Armistice of the First World War, only modest parade changes were implemented by the Ringlings and their managers. They were as circumspect in new wagon construction as Bailey had been during his heyday in the 1890s. Annual, unrelenting maintenance was well-funded, but only incremental changes were made in the elements of the march. A summary of the improvements can be identified as the following:



The Ringling zebra hitch feature, shown in 1912, followed one that had been on both Great London and Barnum & Bailey before the turn of the century, drawing small floats.

Circus World Museum

Ringling Bros.

- 1908 Addition of 24 horse hitch to pull lead Swan bandwagon
- 1909 New float pulled by four zebra team
- 1911 Reconstruction of 1903 Egypt and India floats into box body tableaus
- 1912 Transfer of ex-Forepaugh bandwagon, three new tableaus and four 1880s Barnum & London pony floats from 1910-1911 Forepaugh-Sells
- 1913 New air calliope instrument and wagon Replacement steam calliope instrument and boiler
- 1914 Placement of a Deagan unafon atop the Egypt tab-
- 1916 Conversion of 1903 Spain into Witches Float
- c1916 Deletion of name Germany from tableau

Barnum & Bailey

- 1908 Re-institution of daily parade, augmented with ex-Forepaugh-Sells Columbia and Spain tableaus, tableau cages, two ex-Forepaugh tableaus and 24 horse team on lead Two Hemispheres bandwagon
- 1913 New air calliope instrument and ladies band on altered 1903 King's float
- 1915 Six new tableau cages and alterations to 1883 tableau cages and Spain tableau to match their central scenic panel designs
- c1916 Alteration of Two Hemispheres national seals owing to WWI
- 1917 Extension of four 1903 continental telescoping tableaus to box body tableaus and the conversion of top allegorical figures into "back action" floats towed behind them
- c1917 New air calliope wagon

In the same time frame, Ringling parades were closely managed to achieve peak efficiency in operation. Unusual and unique parade features that impeded a steady pace were dropped or faded away, extreme variety and novelty judged as no longer necessary to impress viewers. The result was a more generic street presentation that facilitated repeatability without delays.

The impressive 24 horse teams on the lead bandwagons, added to Ringling in 1904 and Barnum & Bailey in 1908 were dropped in 1910. They were replaced by eight or ten horse teams, with twelves reported in some years. The four-abreast arrangements required additional work and special harness.

Hitches were fours, sixes and eights, the latter sometimes broken into fours for parade service. These sizes were required to haul heavily loaded baggage wagons between the train and the lot, each making two trips. If there was a ten for the big top center pole wagon, it could go on a lead bandwagon; the twelve on the lead bandwagons in some seasons may have been the joining of two six-ups.

Horses, ridden and pulling, made the processions a demonstration of top-quality work equines. No internal combustion trucks or tractors gained an assignment in any Ringling parade until decades later, even though they were on the lot by 1916. Mounted riders in parade wardrobe rode the backs of saddle horses or single, imposing "chunks" – baggage stock – sparing ring stock from dangerous risks in the streets. The Ringling featured mounted bands on both troupes continued to serenade viewers through 1918.

The unique, four-abreast, 16 camel hitch of the Ringling show, dating to 1904 or 1905, declined in one season, 1915, to six and had two wheel horses, bouncing back to the usual 16 the next year. By 1909 the Ringlings had constructed a simple painted float that was pulled by four zebras, but shed it in 1914.



On August 6, 1910, the 16 camel hitch pulling the Ringling Egypt tableau passed through the streets of Decatur, Illinois. It was never duplicated by any other circus.

Circus World Museum

Four 1880s Barnum & London pony floats toured with Ringling in the 1910s, but they and their pony hitches were all put in the barn after the 1913 to 1915 tours. A team of small ponies was one concession to an unusual hitch on Barnum & Bailey. In the mid-1910s a team of 12 pulled an 1883 tableau cage, and then later a 16 and sometimes a 20 drew the venerable 1871 Howes dragon float.

Elephants were another measure of parade status. For a few years in the early 1910s the Ringling show had toured 28 elephants, which was reduced to 23 in 1918. Barnum & Bailey never had more than 18, starting in 1912. For 1918, Deafy Denman listed 23 on Ringling (all Asiatic, John the only male) and 18 on Barnum & Bailey (all Asiatic, males Pilot and Mighty), a total of 41. Photographs suggest that all elephants on tour, including tusked males, made parade. Howdahs, two of them, were used on Barnum & Bailey, but not Ringling. Handlers on the brothers show rode the somewhat perilous, but viewer-exciting perch atop the foreheads of the elephants, from which they could make a quick dismount.

Ringling-Managed Parades in the 1910s

Lacking an actual parade order for the 1919 and 1920 Combined Shows, the best insight into how it may have been arranged are the parade orders for the predecessor Barnum & Bailey and Ringling Bros. orders in the prior years. Fortunately, all Ringling orders for 1912 to 1918, inclusive, have been discovered; in original booklets issued by the show; and in transcriptions by collectors who acquired Ringling business records, Sverre O. Brathen and William Kasiska. Through them we have a very clear picture of the parades conceived in Baraboo and staged under the oversight of Al and Charles Ringling.⁸

Unfortunately, only a single 1910s order for Barnum & Bailey has been found and the provenance is unknown. Yet, a look at it and initial comparison to period photographs and the Ringling show orders infers it accurately portrays the parades staged out of Bridgeport under Henry and John Ringling, and staffers. The one significant omission is that the presumed last unit, the steam calliope, is not listed. The ends of documents are not uncommonly truncated for a variety of reasons, including ordinary wear and tear. The remainder seems to reflect an actual parade order of the "Ringling style."

Given the single 1916 order to establish the B&B parade, we have chosen to analyze it and the three Ringling orders of 1916 to 1918 to serve as a basis for the successor 1919 parade line-up. Like the train, we suspect that the Combined Shows march was

only incrementally larger and longer than predecessor street demonstrations – and not twice as big as some might conceive. The Ringlings had always embraced tradition, precedents, and rituals, and given all the other obligations for bringing the two shows together for 1919 it is likely that a major re-work of the parade was not undertaken.

The Ringling-presented 1910s parades were all comprised of about 50 units, rising 49 to 50 to 52 from 1916 to 1918. The main elements, repeated every year in about the same sequence in the order, included; lead carriage representing the owners; buglers; mounted female and male riders; ethnic or geographic-identified riders; decorated, box-body parade wagons and floats; open and closed cages; elephants; lead stock; music wagons; air and steam calliopes. Everything was drawn by horse teams, with only one or two unusual hitches. Fairy tale floats, non-equine hitches (elephants, zebras, camels, sacred cattle), marching bands and all other elements that did not support a strategically-timed, reproducible parade were dropped from the line-up. Risks to the timing were thereby eliminated.

The number of bandwagons and tableaus varied little 1916 to 1918, there being 13 or 14. The big show band rode the lead bandwagon. The side show, clown and ticket seller bands rode tableaus. There was an air and a steam calliope, with the electric doorbell-sounding Deagan unafon mounted atop the Egypt tableau. Spectacle vehicles, like the enclosed Cinderella coach of c1915, did not parade.

All of the cages in the menagerie, including the hippo and rhino dens made parade, save that of the giraffe wagons. Backyard cages, for seals and bears, did not parade. Cages numbered a total of 21 or 22 in 1916-1918.

Barnum & Bailey's 1916 procession included 49 entries, with eleven box body wagons, 19 cages and only a steam cal-



A ladies band, augmented by a new air calliope, rode atop the former King's float from 1903, made an entirely unique entry in the 1913 parades staged by Barnum & Bailey.

May Wirth scrapbook, Circus World Museum

liope. The African-American side show band and the clown band rode atop tableaus. The interspersing of elements was very much like that of Ringling orders.

It made no difference which 1918 show staffers determined the order for the 1919 Combined Shows parade. The practices of the two shows, as far as parade entries and sequence, had been about the same for a decade.

Parade Length and Duration

As a matter of business planning, an experienced showman determined just how big a parade was adequate to proclaim the arrival of their circus. It was the same sort of logic that went into the determination of how large the circus would be. The big top seating was established, along with the menagerie of animals and the attractions of the side show. These choices determined the tents required, the wagons, horses and men necessary to move them, as well as the train cars. With a huge herd of baggage stock, the largest elephant herd to travel to that time, and lead stock that could pull a wagon when properly trained, the Ringling-Barnum parade could stretch longer than ever before.

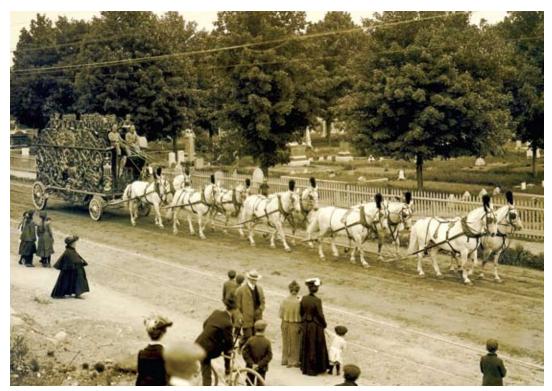
There was a practical limit to the parade length, one that related to time duration. Within the day's operating clock, the parade had to be assembled, course through the streets and return for disassembly, without incident or delay, so that the money-making aspects of the circus, the raison d'être, could be conducted in a profitable manner. Given that the 1919 show was incrementally larger than either 1918 troupe, 10 to 18% based on the accompanying train analysis, a decision was made to stage a similarly comparable street procession. It would not be the union of both 1918 street presenta-

tions – no "double length" as shows once termed their train cars

The pace of the parade was set by the walking speed of the baggage stock. It was about four miles per hour. The big camel hitch on Ringling was trained to keep up with the horse pace, as were the elephants. Pachyderms were often at the end, just ahead of the calliope, giving handlers time to prepare them for their exercise walk.¹⁰

The staffer assessed with planning the parade route likely had a certain time of duration in mind when making the plan. Manipulating the length, time and speed gave the balance desired. Simply put, the speed of the parade multiplied by the time duration equaled the distance covered. By determining the length of the parade route, and dividing it by the horse's pace, the time to accomplish it was known, other than for delays with horses and elephants, and the interference of city police, vehicles, people and streetcars. Increasingly, elements beyond the circus to control made the event ever more difficult to execute and played a factor in the eventual abandonment.

The first data point we have on parade time passage is from 1881. The initial Barnum & Great London parade so carefully documented by Forepaugh's representative, with 53 entries, required 20 minutes to pass a fixed point. It was staged at night, by torchlight, a variable that surely had an impact on the timing. Not being conducted during the course of a normal day's street activity, Bailey's staff had less to be concerned about. By comparison, Forepaugh's 1881 procession had 45 listings and that for 1883 had 50.¹¹ New York City newspaper accounts of the Barnum & London 1885 parade suggest it had about 50 to 60 units, the cages



Shown here on Forepaugh-Sells in 1902, the big Spain tableau was transferred to Barnum & Bailey for 1908, adding both wardrobe storage capacity and more flash to the parade.

Circus World Museum

not being accurately recorded.

It is our belief that viewers of the 1881 Barnum & London procession later in the season witnessed a tightened-up and practiced event that lasted less than 15 minutes. ¹² As noted above, the sequential combined parade presented by the Barnum and Forepaugh outfits in early 1887 took 30 minutes to pass a single point. Assuming parity in size, each show put out a parade that gave viewers a 15-minute experience.

At Waterloo, Iowa, on August 27, 1904, a film was made of the Barnum & Bailey street parade. Though the entire order was not documented, since the listing exists for the march content the time duration can be calculated. The math reveals that the complete 55 entry line-up would have required about ten minutes to pass a fixed observer. Calculation of the parade length puts it as one-half to two-thirds of a mile long. Ringling publicity in the same season claimed that their rolling street spectacle would require 36 to 45 minutes to view and stretched for three miles. Obviously, hyperbole was the order of the day.¹³

This limited study suggests that from 1881 onward through 1918 the largest circus parades had between 50 and 55 to 60 units and endured about 10 to 15 minutes at a given fixed point. The time duration spent in the streets fluctuated, depending upon the length of the parade route and the challenges encountered in the street.

The time that the parade was in the streets seems to have been flexible. The longest duration that has come to our notice is the 4½ hour marathon endured by Bailey's people and animals in Brooklyn at the opening of the 1903 tour. The distance and time were equivalent to the movements that overland shows made between daily engagements in the 19th century! As metropolitan areas expanded, the distance from purposeful show lots to downtown extended to ever greater distances. 14

Combined Shows 1919

The receding circus trade, threat of governmental controls and intervention, and the illness and dying off of Ringling brothers precipitated a major inflection in their operation. After a long time of evaluation, the remaining brothers decided to retrench

back to a single circus, a platform not in effect since 1904.

Two fleets of wagons were jammed into every available square foot of space at the winter quarters at the end of the 1918 tours of Barnum & Bailey and Ringling Bros. This aggregation was the joining of two 83-railroad car outfits, the largest ever brought together. Half the trains were flat cars, loaded with three to four wagons, about 80 per show. They were longer and heavier than those that were gathered at Bridgeport in the winter of 1880, so even though the shows had more railroad cars the number of ground vehicles remained similar. Merging them for 1919 was a task comparable to Barnum & Great London's 1881 puzzle.

Beyond the arriving wagons, those that had not been used on the Barnum show in the 1910s were also on the site and some of them reached back in time. There were additional vehicles stored at Baraboo, the former Ringling winter quarters, that were left behind when the show train pulled out in the spring of 1918. Inventories at both locations had been reduced by sales of discarded pieces to less prominent showmen. Bailey had commenced such sell-offs in 1880 and had done a half dozen public auctions, not to mention numerous private sales. A couple railroad mishaps but primarily a half dozen Bridgeport fires from 1887 to the early 1900s also eroded the vehicle population. The Ringlings also incurred wrecks but were spared fire. They steadily sold off older pieces as they rapidly expanded, and also spun off Forepaugh-Sells pieces, after taking over the Columbus quarters and show management and following the shelving



For the 1917 Barnum & Bailey tour, the four continental telescoping tableaus were rebuilt to full height and the allegorical figures made into floats that were towed behind.

Fred Bodin photograph, courtesy Wil Seippel

of the 1910-1911 re-issue. There was not a lot of fat left to trim by 1918, but the merger dramatically changed the situation. The Ringlings would rapidly be awash in excess, and at a time when the market demand for railroad circus apparatus was declining.

The array of moveable gems that sat about Bridgeport through the winter of 1918 was as varied as imaginable. The oldest of the chariots dated to at least 1871 and the latest were made new for 1915. Their talented makers were the best in the trade, including Fielding and Sebastian in New York City, also Bode and Schmidt of Cincinnati, Moeller in Baraboo, craftsmen in various winter quarters and others anonymous; as well as carvers like Samuel Robb, the Milwaukee Ornamental Carving Company and wagon builder-employed wood artisans and decorators. A galaxy of the brightest stars in field show history had utilized them: Barnum, Barnum & London, Barnum & Bailey; Adam Forepaugh; Howes Great London; Cooper & Bailey and Great London; Ringling Bros.; W. C. Coup; Buffalo Bill's Wild West; Sells Bros. and Forepaugh-Sells were all included in the pedigrees. The array of Big Bertha's jewels were unexcelled.

An Unpublicized Parade Theme

A "Congress of Nations" was initially served up as a grand entrée by the 1874 Barnum Hippodrome. It was supported by the January 2nd purchase of the Congress of

Monarchs from British showmen George and John Sanger. Included in the £13,000 buy (about \$1.2 million in 2019) were "13 gorgeous carved and gilded emblazoned chariots," as well as 1,136 pieces of wardrobe and properties.¹⁵

The international concept was revived two decades later by James A. Bailey for his 1894 Barnum & Bailey tour parades. It followed the Columbus quarter century in 1892 and the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition at Chicago, which was attended by one in every ten Americans. The parade featured several titled presentations, including one for Spain and banners for other parade entries.

Considering America's ascension to a world power and display of military might by battleship diplomacy, Bailey decided in early 1902 to go full bore on the international theme for the planned 1903 return stateside. His choice was followed some months later by the Ringlings, to maintain pace. Their mutual choices sparked the greatest outlay of funds for parade wagon design and construction in American field show history.¹⁶

The John Robinson 10 Big Shows mimicked their marches in a modest way with a few veteran tableaus that were given names of continents. The last flowering on the theme was the array of nation-inspired tableau bodies that were installed on the trucks that formed the fleet conveying Frank Spellman's U. S. Motorized Circus in 1919.¹⁷

With the abundance of nation-themed wagons surviving from the two great parades of 1903, it was a simple

matter to settle on an informal "nations of the world" character for the initial Ringling-Barnum processions. By no coincidence, it was a timely concept. The Great War had consumed the world from 1914 through 1918. In the initial year of the conflict a "League of Nations" phrase had been conceived and circulated and discussion continued until the group was formally organized in 1920. The activity resonated with the 1919 parade theme, but no reference was made to the negotiations taking place on the international stage in RBBB publicity. The identity of some nations resonated in immigrant enclaves along parade routes, while others, notably German-Americans, did not have to wonder why their homeland was excluded.

Red Herring Parade Order

Little has been written about the daily street parades staged by the Combined Shows in 1919 and 1920. Fred Bradna, in his memoir, paraphrased or recalled from memory a listing that he identified as being the order used in 1919 to 1921. Unfortunately, it has numerous entries that conflict with the photographic record and lacks others that should presumably be there. Regardless, it is faulted. About three decades had expired between the events and his writing, a term that might explain some of the differences identified through study.

We can cite the following specific concerns with this account. The parades of 1919 and 1920 were planned as daily events, other than in cities where there were multiple-days long bookings. The single 1921 parade was a one-time event, not daily. There is no evidence of baggage wagons serving in parades, in the manner as described. Bradna, or co-author Hartzell Spence, also spun a tale about how the last parade in 1921 evoked an emotional outcry. In reality, everyone who had to participate in the street processions was glad to see their abandonment. The joy and mirth they provoked in viewers was not shared by showfolks. **Bw**

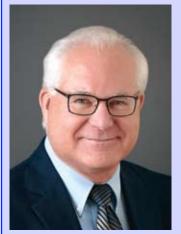
To be continued

Part II will set forth the choices made for the first Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Combined Shows street parades of 1919 and also look past those presentations to the end of the era.

Endnotes

- 1. New York Clipper, Apr. 29, 1876, p. 39.
- 2. See *Bandwagon*, May-June 1997, cover; *Bandwagon*, Jan.-Feb. 1978, p. 27; and *Bandwagon*, Nov.-Dec. 1987, cover.
- 3. Philadelphia Inquirer, Apr. 9 and 12, 1880.
- 4. Fred D. Pfening III, "A Documentary History of the Barnum and London Circus in 1881," *Bandwagon*, Nov.-Dec. 2008, pp. 5-70.
- 5. Rat bills in Circus World Museum and Fred D. Pfening III collections.

- 6. Bridgeport Daily Standard, Mar. 14, 1887.
- 7. Fred D. Pfening III, "The Two Hemispheres Bandwagon," *White Tops*, Part 1, Sept.-Oct. 2016, pp. 30-39; Part 2, Jan.-Feb. 2017, pp. 28-40; and Part 3, Mar.-Apr. 2017, pp. 30-39. This article provides considerable insight on this contract and other matters pertinent to Barnum & Bailey parades of 1903-1918.
- 8. 1916 is in C. P. Fox, *Circus Parades*, 1953, pp. 9-11; 1917 is in Kristin L. Spangenberg and Deborah W. Walk, eds., *The Amazing American Circus Poster*, 2011, p. 42; and 1918 is in *White Tops*, Nov.-Dec. 1948, p. 23.
- 9. Bandwagon, Sept.-Oct. 1957, p. 10, without attribution.
- 10. Elephants were typically worked up and down on the lot, to cause them to void there, rather than in the street.
- 11. 1881 Barnum & London rat bill and 1883 Forepaugh route book.
- 12. New York Times, Mar. 27, 1881.
- 13. Greg Parkinson, "James A. Bailey's Last Parades 1903 & 1904," *Bandwagon*, May-June 1982, pp. 4-10.
- 14. Fred D. Pfening III to author, Feb. 10, 2019.
- 15. P. T. Barnum, Struggles and Triumphs; the Recollections of P. T. Barnum, n. d. [1882?], pp. 314-317, and Bluford Adams, E Pluribus Barnum, The Great Showman and the Making of U. S. Popular Culture, 1997, pp. 164-175.
- 16. See the author's "The History of the Golden Age of Chivalry," *Bandwagon*, Mar.-Apr. 1997, pp. 24-31.
- 17. See the author's "Artifact of the Early Motorized Circus: Cole Bros. France Tableau," *Bandwagon*, Sept.-Oct. 1996, pp. 4-10.
- 18. Fred Bradna and Hartzell Spence, *The Big Top*, 1952, pp. 289-294. The parade order has been transcribed and published elsewhere, without attribution.

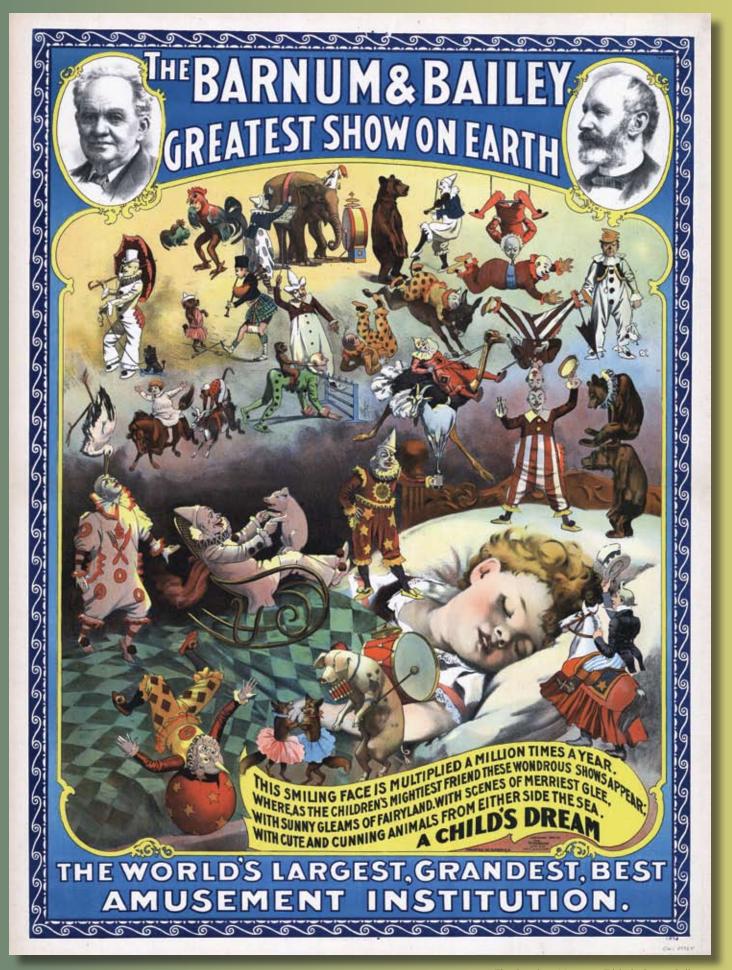


About the Author

Fred Dahlinger, Jr. completed a 27-year long career in circus documentation management with his retirement from The Ringling in July 2018. His published works include several books and dozens of articles, which represent a five-decades long passion for circus arts and business. Recently he served as the archival consultant to the 2018

American Experience production *The Circus*.

Fred, contributing editor for *Bandwagon*, has served the Circus Historical Society as president and trustee, and he managed the 2018 CHS convention in Baraboo. He continues to research and write on topics of particular interest in outdoor amusements.





A Child's Dream

by Jennifer Lemmer Posey

Circus posters offer a seemingly unlimited window on both the history of the circus and how that history might be used to explore other areas of popular culture. At The Ringling Museum, posters are often exhibited in combination with other objects to explore a variety of topics. A recent exhibit, made possible by bringing together two unique

The exhibition A Child's Dream paired a selection of circusthemed antique toys with posters that were from the same period to help museum visitors appreciate the importance of the circus in American popular culture.

collections, introduced museum visitors to the prevalence of circus imagery in early American manufactured toys. The exhibit was inspired by a visit to the private toy collection of Keith Monda. One by one, each toy seemed to immediately conjure the image of a poster in the Tibbals Circus Collection. Bringing toys and posters together created a display text continued on page 56

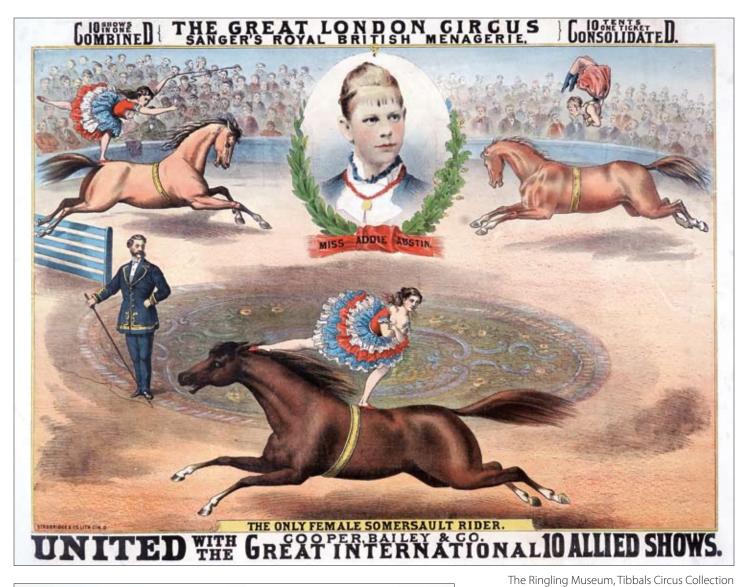


The Ringling Museum, Tibbals Circus Collection

Crandall's Acrobats were manufactured first the early 1870s, a few years before artist Emil Rothengatter designed the poster for La Montie Family of French Acrobats and Specialty People, but the toy, like the poster, illustrated the clever ways that performers could find to balance together.



Keith D. Monda Collection







The W. S. Reed Toy Company also produced a Gigantic Circus and Mammoth Hippodrome playset in the 1880s. This set allowed children to create their own performances of riders on horseback and aerialists on the trapeze. The layering of so many different things happening at once has a visual echo in many of the equestrian posters of the time, like the circa 1879 Great London Circus's litho for Miss Addie Austin.

Keith D. Monda Collection





Keith D. Monda Collection

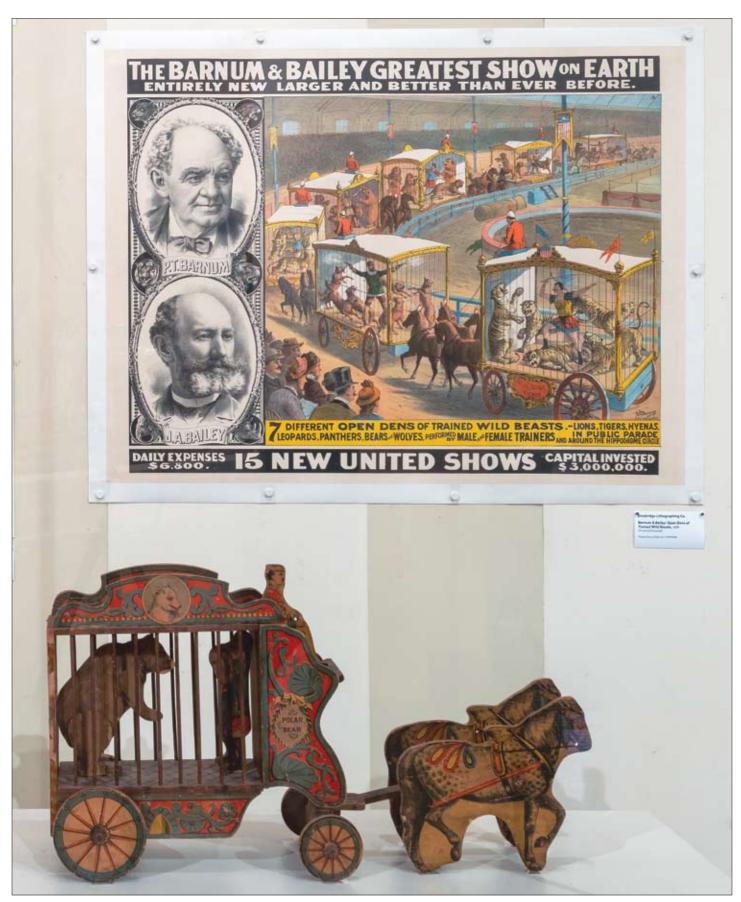
Charles Crandall's Happy Family menagerie wagon also dates to the early 1870s and offers animals similar to those first appearing in American traveling shows like the National Menagerie, whose 1833 bill was displayed alongside the toy. Crandall's ingenuity created the wagon to serve both as toy and as a storage box for all of the smaller pieces.



This image shows the reverse side of Crandall's toy wagon.

Keith D. Monda Collection

The Ringling Museum, Tibbals Circus Collection



An 1889 Strobridge poster for Barnum & Bailey featuring 7 Open Dens of Trained Wild Beasts accompanied a toy wagon containing a polar bear made by W. S. Reed Toy Company around 1900. The toy was originally built so that as it rolled, the bear would rear up on its hind legs inside the wagon.



These Wild West themed pins were likely created for a target game around 1900, but their imagery is drawn directly from posters like the circa 1887 Strobridge lithograph for Barnum & London's "Heroines of the Wild West."

The Ringling Museum, Tibbals Circus Collection



Keith D. Monda Collection



The Ringling Museum, Tibbals Circus Collection



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Performer Leon
LaRoche and
his "Sphere
Mysterieuse" were
featured on the
Barnum & Bailey
show's European
tour and were
most clearly the
inspiration for
French toymaker
Ferdinand Martin's
1906 Boule
Mysterieuse tin
toy.

that entertained museum visitors and spurred additional thoughts on the circus, childhood, and education.

Like so many interesting stories, the relationship between toys and circus seems to have a start with the illustrious P. T. Barnum. The showman's talent for identifying and shaping public taste is undeniable, among his most astute observations of culture, was his recognition of the growing importance of the child to the changing American economy. From his 1855 National Baby Show to the marketing of Jumbo as "The Children's Giant Pet," Barnum offered the new middle-class a diverse range of attractions that would entertain and celebrate their children.

Advances to automation that came about in the latter half of the 19th century changed the shape and relationships of the family unit in Western cultures. In the United States, families no longer were as dependent on children and their mothers to provide labor on farms or to serve as additional income earners in factories. Improvements in health care and in living conditions also lowered the mortality rate for children. Culturally, childhood was being reconceptualized as a special time of growth and intellectual development, a series of developmental stages. These new attitudes brought about the professionalization of teaching and the introduction of compulsory schooling laws. And so childhood and learning became increasingly linked.

Charles Martin Crandall was only 16, a child by today's standards, when he took over management of his family's woodworking business in Covington, Pennsylvania. In the 1860s Crandall, inspired by a desire to entertain his own child who was recovering from scarlet fever, applied the tongue and groove style of furniture construction to the making of interlocking blocks. An order from his family doctor inspired the woodworker to refocus his business and his first pitch was to none other than Phineas Taylor Barnum. Crandall was given a spot to sell his blocks in Barnum's New Museum in the late 1860s. While those early blocks interlocked to build structures, Crandall had expanded his offerings to circus and menagerie figures by 1875.

In this time when play increasingly was recognized as an important element in children's intellectual development, the logistics and mechanics of the circus performance became engaging subjects for learning and logical reasoning. Menageries, with their exotic specimens were equally useful in both exciting the imagination and offering the potential for an education about the broader world. Crandall's interlocking *Acrobats*, first issued in 1874, and *W. S. Reed's Gigantic Circus and Mammoth Hippodrome* toy of 1885 are evidence of the popularity of circus imagery in 19th century American toys.

Along with the prevalence of circus imagery in 19th century toys, it is interesting to note that both toys and circuses took advantage of advances in commercial printing. Lithographic printing, the art behind the brilliantly colored circus advertisements, was also used widely in manufacturing of



By the 1930s and 1940s tin wind-up toys and cast lead figures became popular, and toy makers gravitated toward the iconic figures of the circus, especially clowns and elephants.

toys. To achieve the mischievous expressions and eye-catching wardrobe of Crandall's acrobats, paper printed through the lithographic process was adhered to the shaped blocks. Lithography and ink stamping were widely used to inexpensively and efficiently give detail and color to wooden toys of the time.

It is interesting to note how the toys and the posters created in the late 19th century represent a certain richness of aesthetics. In an era when the pace of life was slower, there was great attention to detail. The many pieces and endless possibilities presented by the *Acrobats* or the *Hippodrome* resonate with imagery like The Great London Circus' poster for *Miss Addie Austin*. Audiences of this time were accustomed to seeing multiple moments of time depicted in a single scene.

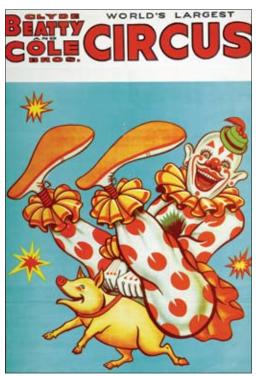
In the first quarter of the 20th century the pace of life sped up for many Americans, and cars and bicycles became more widely available. As a result, the imagery of circus posters was simplified. Instead of showing multiple tricks or big tops filled with action, posters were designed to feature iconic images of beautiful women, funny clowns, or exotic animals. These same iconic figures were adapted to the popular windup toys that were increasingly available on the toy market. Toys, like entertainment, adapted to keep up with the times.

The inclusion of toys in the poster exhibition encouraged a new multi generation dialogue in the gallery as grandparents remembered favorite toys and children wondered what would happen if they could spin a wheel or push a wagon. But more importantly, the combination of toys and circus advertisements reminded visitors of how much joy the circus continues to inspire. **BW**



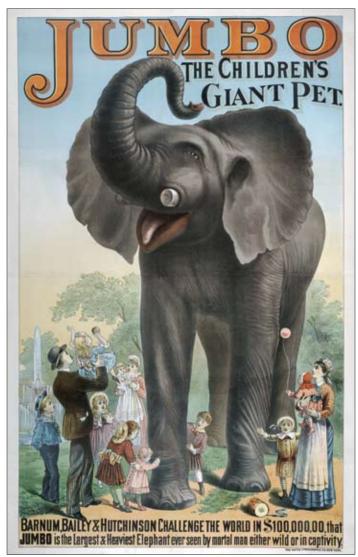
Keith D. Monda Collection

The mechanical clown car created in the 1930s by Unique Arts Manufacturing Co. exemplifies the more graphic bold colors and shapes of 20th century design. The lightheartedness of the figure brings to mind the more cartoonish clowns seen in circus advertising of the 1950s and 1960s like the poster for Clyde Beatty and Cole Bros. World's Largest Circus.



The Ringling Museum, Tibbals Circus Collection





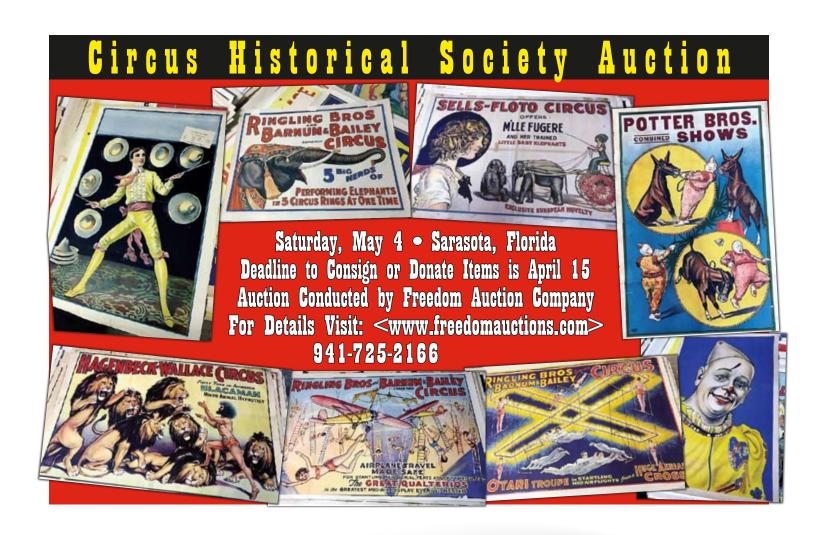
The Ringling Museum, Tibbals Circus Collection

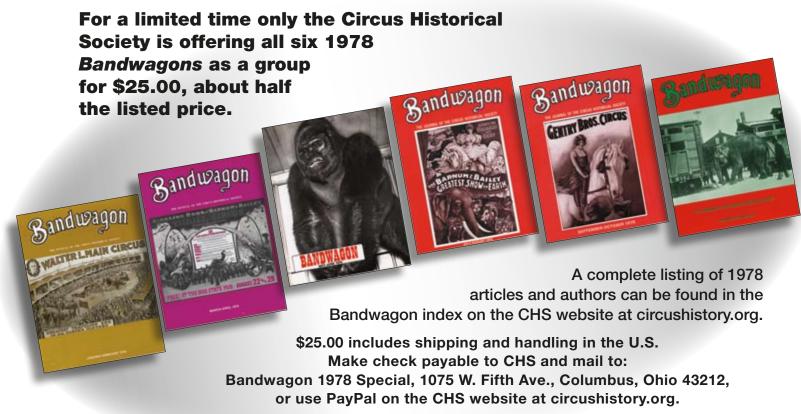
Also on display in the exhibition were a number of beautiful miniature scenes created by the French company Mignot, founded in 1825. A zoological park, a European circus ring and scenes from Arabian Knights and the story of Joan of Arc all presented children and adults the opportunity to learn as they physically reenacted or even reimagined well-known stories.

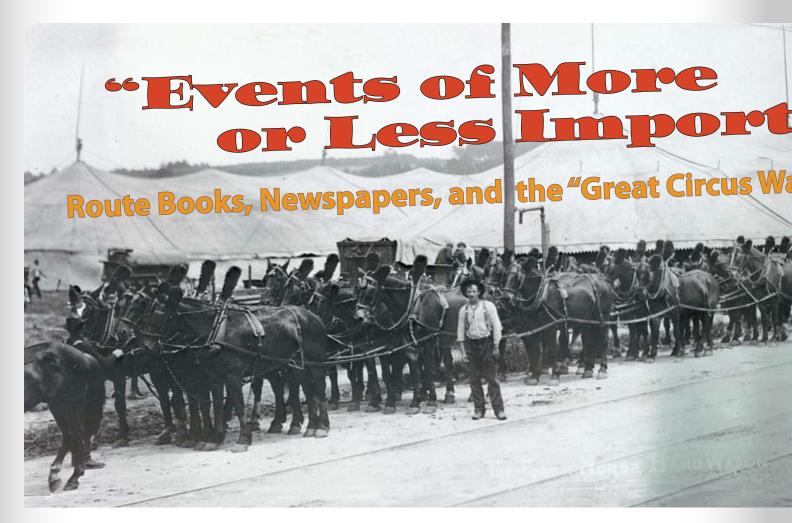
The elephant Jumbo was so burned into the American imagination that mechanical toys of the great animal have been made since the early 20th century. This mid-century toy was displayed along with the well-known Hatch Litho featuring Jumbo, "The Children's Giant Pet."



Keith D. Monda Collection







by William J. Hansard

In the autumn of 1902, the Barnum & Bailey circus returned to the United States from a tour of Europe that had lasted nearly five years. The tour was a monumental undertaking, requiring over a thousand people and animals, conveyed on a massive railroad train that hauled literally tons of equipment. The show toured through countries and towns that had never seen a traveling circus of such magnitude; there was no similar competitor to the Barnum & Bailey show in Europe.

Meanwhile, back in the United States, the Ringling Bros. circus was further expanding from its traditional territory in the Midwest into the Eastern Seaboard, intruding on the traditional territory of Barnum & Bailey. James A. Bailey had left the Forepaugh-Sells and Buffalo Bill's Wild West shows to hold his territory, and while they did well, the Ringling brothers were still able to gain popularity and territory. A weary but determined Bailey did his best to make the Ringlings fight for that territory in 1903. To keep an eye on the competition, Bailey had traveled between the United States and Europe during the tour, and early in 1902 he ordered 13 new wagons for his parade, almost a year before the Ringling brothers did likewise.

Even before the November 1902 return to winter quar-

ters in Bridgeport, Connecticut, the Barnum & Bailey show had already inaugurated preparation for its 1903 tour of the United States, scheduled to begin in March. Bailey planned to have the biggest and most spectacular circus yet, ordering new animals for the menagerie and as large a big top canvas as had been used to that time.

The account of how well the circus performed depends on which sources are consulted. According to the show's route book, it was a magnificent season, largely free of misfortune. Other period sources, mainly newspapers, observed that the circus turned out to be the heaviest and most cumbersome yet, resulting in what seemed to some a crippled show, experiencing one major challenge after another. The divergence in assessments between show-issued information and media reporting is not unknown in field show history, but is worthy of investigation.

Sometimes at the end of a season, a circus staffer would compile a route book, which usually included a roster of personnel and a daily diary of events, among other information. One would anticipate that such route books would recount a relatively complete narrative of a season. Unfortunately, but perhaps not surprisingly, this was not always the case. Even when things were going well – and especially when they were not – route books often failed to tell the whole story. Moreover, when compared with newspaper accounts, route

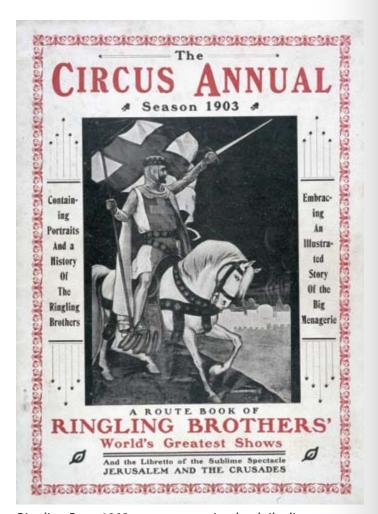


The massive Two Hemispheres Bandwagon was built for Barnum & Bailey's "triumphant" return to the United States following a five-year absence. This Frederick Glasier photograph shows the 40 bay Percheron horse team hitched to the wagon in preparation for the morning street parade.

Circus World Museum

books often told a markedly different story. This is not to say that the public accounts always provided the fullest or most accurate records, or should be taken at face value. Oftentimes, newspaper reports about a circus were actually written by press agents and given to journalists, carefully crafted to sound like an individual's endorsement rather than a paid, or gratis, advertisement. Still, such reports often provide a useful supplement – or in some instances, the route book may serve as a supplement to newspapers and other sources, such as memoirs.

It is also useful to consider the events of a given season – regardless of how they may have been recorded and reported – within their historical context, in an attempt to build a broader narrative of the season that will give greater meaning to accounts of events. Doing so may even provide a greater understanding of the veracity of the information in the route book. This investigation, then, will serve a dual purpose: first, to ascertain the veracity of the historical information recorded in the circus route books of 1903 and to



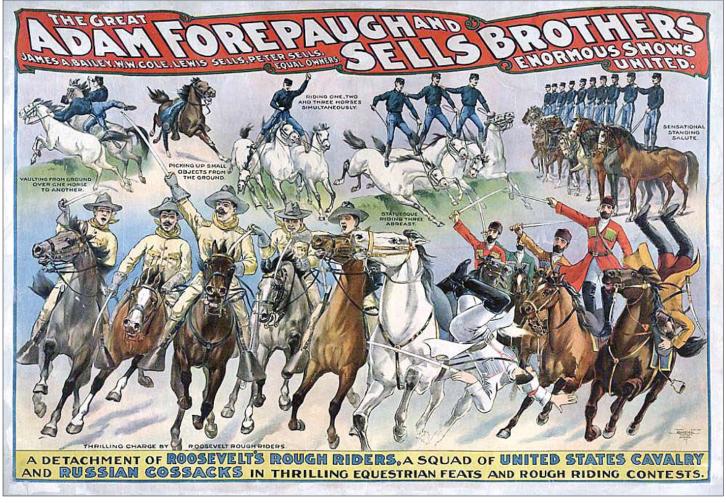
Ringling Bros. 1903 season, contained a daily diary, a roster of personnel, the performance lineup, photographs and illustrations, and more.

The Ringling Museum, Tibbals Circus Collection

determine how to best employ them in research; and second, to build a narrative of the 1903 circus season, which in turn can be examined in a broader historical context.

While it is not a year that Americans have committed to memory, 1903 was a momentous one for the United States. In political and military affairs, President Theodore Roosevelt continued to push an agenda of American expansionism, most notably in supporting the war of independence in Panama. After recognizing the independence of the Republic of Panama from Colombia, President Roosevelt signed a series of treaties to gain control over the Panama Canal Zone, picking up where French companies had left off in building the Canal. To some degree, such expansionism was an inherent facet of American culture. Since the colonial period, Americans had romanticized territorial expansion and military operations, and such conflicts were often viewed in cultural terms. This was certainly true at the time, as noted by historian of popular culture LeRoy Ashby:

"Territorial expansion fused neatly with entertainment. Indeed, in 1901, one reporter believed



Equestrian presentations that included Rough Riders were commonplace by 1903, having been first performed with Ringling Bros. in 1889, less than a year after Theodore Roosevelt led the charge up San Juan Hill in Cuba during the Spanish-American War.

The Ringling Museum, Tibbals Circus Collection

that the war against Filipino rebels resembled a Wild West show: 'The Theory of the Administration is that the trouble in the Philippines is like the Wild West show. It isn't war, but it looks a good deal like it.' "2

Expansionist endeavors such as the Panama Canal were inextricably linked to the growth of industrial capitalism, which also thrived that year. New companies that would come to have great significance were incorporated, such as the Ford Motor Company and Pepsi-Cola, and a number of mass-produced popular goods were introduced, such as the Teddy bear and Crayola crayons. In no small part thanks to the progression of cultural imperialism, popular culture industries likewise flourished in 1903. For example, in January, the two major baseball leagues made peace after two years of intense competition, as the upstart American League had challenged the monopoly of the National League. In October, they pitted the Boston Americans (now the Red Sox) against the Pittsburgh Pirates in the first World Series. Although the baseball leagues may have made peace, the circus industry saw competition on a grand scale, exacerbated

by problems political, industrial, and cultural.

As historian Janet Davis has put it, the circus was "at the height of its physical maturation at the dawn of the 20th century." Both Ashby and Davis argue that the processes of "rationalization" which characterized the era were not only taking place within the circus, but indeed that the circus was crucial in their development, and in bringing this rationalization to communities both urban and rural. This period was indeed the apex of what Davis has deemed "the circus age." The 1903 season, in fact, was one of the biggest in American history to that point, with no fewer than 98 circuses, Wild West shows, menageries and the like "disrupting" communities around the nation either by rail or road transport.⁴

Such a crowded field, of course, meant that competition was more heated than ever, which brings us to the beginnings of the so-called Great Circus War. To term this business competition such – a "war" fought with print, pictures, posters and paste – is sensationalized, yes, but less hyperbolic than one might imagine. As we shall see, victory in battle, and especially the proclamation of victory to the masses,

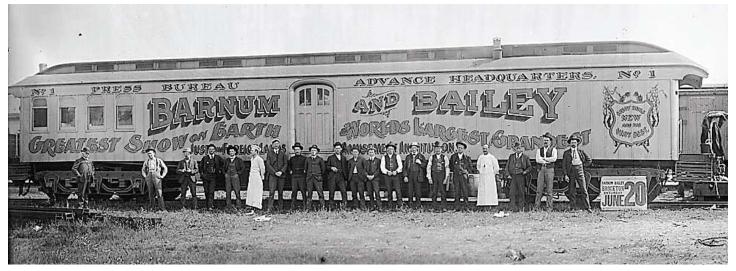
was deemed as crucial to the ongoing success of a circus.

"It is prophesied that this country will see a great circus war next season," a Michigan journalist wrote in the January 20, 1903 evening edition of the Muskegon Chronicle. "There will be a red-hot advertising campaign and a cutting and slashing of prices such as all circusdom has never witnessed." Though his language sounded apocalyptic, the reporter was pleased with such a scenario: "Let the merry war go on, the public will be interested beneficiaries."5 It was a prescient prediction, for even as the shows had internal issues to deal with, the rivalries between circuses grew stronger as the season went on. On April 14, a journalist for the Republican in Springfield, Massachusetts reported on a rivalry between Ringling and Barnum in booking advantageous dates. Ringling Bros. tentatively committed to play the city on June 9, and Barnum & Bailey decided to move their date from July 20 to a preemptive appearance on June 5. This would force Ringling Bros. to choose a much later date, if they chose to play the town at all. The reporter also noted that "those interested" expected that the overall strategy for the season would involve Barnum & Bailey leading the way, and for the Forepaugh-Sells show – in which Bailey owned a controlling interest – to follow Ringling Bros. ⁶ By July, the Patriot in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania reported that Bailey's shows were giving "deliberate battle" to the Ringling Bros. circus.7

While it is clear that the rivalry between both larger and smaller circuses in 1903 was genuine, just how much of this so-called Great Circus War was a creation of the news media is difficult to determine. In a May 24 interview with a Canton, Ohio paper, G. W. Goodman, the manager of Ringling Bros. Advertising Car #3, spoke openly about the established use of "opposition gangs" in circus advertising. "They are out for the purpose of billing against other shows... Sometimes there are lively scrimmages to secure coveted privileges in

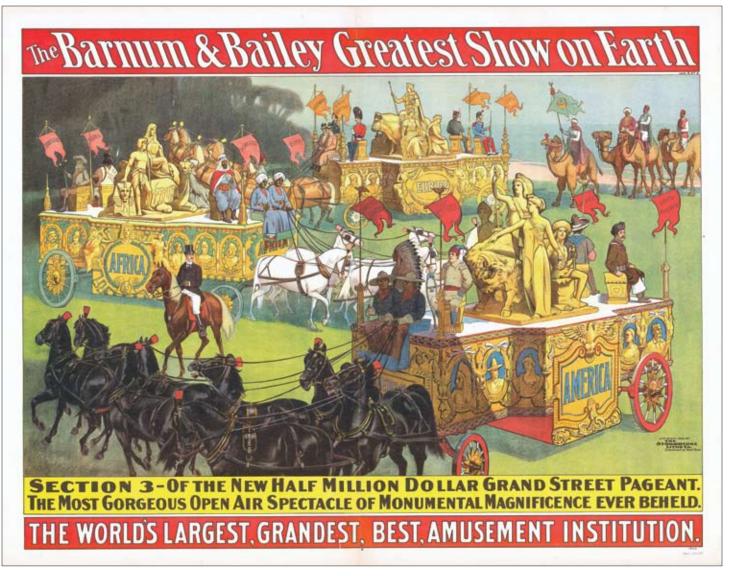
advance of the other fellows." In this case, "the other fellows" were the Barnum & Bailey circus. Confirming the ongoing rivalry, Goodman said, "Just now we are 'bucking' Barnum and Bailey 'down east' in New Jersey and adjoining states."8 It is worth noting that according to the Ringling Bros. route book for 1902, the brothers met with James A. Bailey in May of that year to plan circus routes for the next season and to avoid overlap. If the report from the Springfield Republican was accurate, it would mean that Bailey used the meeting at least in part to undercut the Ringlings, rather than work with them. The actual routes of the shows, however, very rarely came close to each other, which leaves such reports somewhat in doubt. In late May, the Ringling Bros. show traveled through upstate New York and spent the first half of June in Canada, and the Barnum & Bailey show traveled through eastern Pennsylvania in late May and into New Jersey in early June. They did occasionally pass through the same city within a close window of time. The shortest of these windows was at Albany, New York, which the shows visited within five days of each other - the Ringling circus on May 30, and the Barnum & Bailey show on June 4. Throughout the season, the closest these two circuses ever came to each other on the same day was a distance of over 200 miles. The routing agreement kept the two shows a comfortable distance apart - being a longer distance that would not be bridged by excursion train operations on Circus Day.

Still, reporters were eager to take notions of a circus war as far as they could, and when, for example, Ringling Bros. was denied a license to play in Boston, it was insinuated that the management at Barnum & Bailey was behind the decision. Louis E. Cooke, the general manager of the advance department for Barnum & Bailey, not only denied those specific allegations, but that the Great Circus War was occurring at all. Charles H. Davis, legal adjuster for the Ringling Bros. show, was unsure if the opposition from Barnum &



The crew of the Barnum & Bailey Advance Car #1 posed for Frederick W. Glasier in 1903. Circuses already had a long tradition of opposition advertising, but James Bailey's desire to regain dominance in the United States after his show's European tour led to intense billposting efforts that year.

The Ringling Museum, Tibbals Circus Collection



Among the new wagons that Bailey ordered for his 1903 parade, were four continental tableaux representing Africa, the Americas, Asia and Europe. The carvings that decked these vehicles were replicas of allegorical sculptures that were part of the Prince Albert Memorial situated in Kensington Gardens in London.

Circus World Museum

Bailey was as forceful as reporting suggested, but he was troubled by the circumstances. "Circus wars are not what many people think they are," he told the reporter. "I have never known opposition from Barnum & Bailey's circus before. If it is true, as the report goes, it is the first time that the thing has happened." Davis further noted that he would have his advertising agents on the ground investigate the matter. Circus historian Fred Dahlinger notes that conflicts like these were not uncommon when routing a circus. "Municipalities working against specific shows wasn't unknown, and in some instances railroads refused to contract to haul a circus if they were already booked to handle another." One could speculate that due to the difficulties in Springfield and Boston, the Ringling show ultimately did not visit Massachusetts that season.

The Ringling Bros. probably did not need to worry about missing out on Massachusetts. Without a doubt, it was the

Barnum & Bailey circus that had the most at stake in 1903. Bailey decided that in order to compete with Ringling Bros., as well as a number of second-tier circuses such as the Great Wallace circus, 13 his show needed to be the most spectacular it ever had been. It was largely because of this decision that for the Barnum & Bailey circus, the season of 1903 was fraught with challenges. The first of these came even before the season had begun. On the afternoon of February 24, a few weeks before the show was to open, a great fire engulfed the new brick car shops at the winter quarters in Bridgeport, Connecticut. The fire was caused by a lamp being knocked to the ground, where it fell into a store of benzene, paint, or another especially flammable material.¹⁴ A number of railcars and wagons stored in the shops were either new or had been freshly painted, causing the fire to spread more rapidly than it might have otherwise. Elephants that were housed nearby in a separate structure became frightened and began

to trumpet as their keepers calmly moved them to a nearby shed. A crowd began to gather, wondering if the menagerie animals might escape, or be released. Suddenly, a cornice on the roof collapsed, injuring twelve firemen. After raging for half an hour, the fire had completely destroyed six new Pullman cars, two new flat cars, and part of the building, as well as damaging other railroad cars and wagons. The loss was estimated at \$100,000, only \$33,000 of which was covered by insurance. Boute books did not generally cover winter quarters activities, but it is still telling that no mention of the fire is to be found in the route book for 1903, while the story can be found in a number of newspapers, to varying degrees of detail.

Here, we should take an aside to discuss the route book itself for the 1903 season. The diary of the tour was published not on its own, but as a combined book with the season of 1904. The information on 1904 contained in the route book is plentiful, including a detailed diary of events. It is also placed first in the book, the pages filled with stories, photographs, and more.

The section on 1903, a slim fraction of the book, is relegated to the back, and is desperately wanting for more information. The compiler of the 1903 section apologized to the reader, claiming that "no accurate account can be se-

cured of the many incidents and happenings of the Season of 1903." ¹⁶ He was not exaggerating; there were in fact many incidents, and the sparse account found in the route book is far from accurate. Certainly, there were more than a few bad days during the season, many of which are not accurately accounted for in the route book. In his memoir, Fred Bradna, an equestrian performer who had first joined the circus for the 1903 season, claimed that 42 performances were missed during the first half of the season alone. ¹⁷ Perhaps the compiler truly had difficulty in gathering the information, or perhaps his (and Bailey's) intentions were to sugarcoat the account, often through omissions. More than likely, it was some combination of the two.

There are many incidents that occurred during that season that are missing from the route book entirely, and in other instances, the route book actively contradicts newspaper reports. On June 5, the circus visited Springfield, Massachusetts. According to the route book, the circus arrived early, giving the standard parade and two shows. According to the *New York Clipper*, there was a rail accident which delayed one section of the train until 12:00 noon. The parade was cancelled, and the afternoon show was late. Additionally, one canvasman, Fred Davis, broke his left shoulder attempting to raise a tent pole and was taken to the Spring-



One of the unique designs among Bailey's new parade vehicles was that of the Golden Age of Chivalry with its twin-headed dragon. The configuration of all 13 of the new parade wagons precluded them carrying any significant baggage.

Circus World Museum



Barnum & Bailey workers posed for Charles Andress, who recorded this laborious method of carrying bales of canvas in 1903 or 1904.

Private collection

field Hospital for treatment.¹⁸ Examined within the larger context of the season, inclusion of the numerous accidents and delays such as these, which went unmentioned in the route book, might have cast doubts on the capabilities of the management.

Bailey's high expectations and massively expanded show caused many of the challenges that befell the circus that season and were at the core of the struggles for Barnum & Bailey in 1903. For example, often discussed by circus historians were the new and magnificent tableau parade wagons which Barnum & Bailey ordered for the tour from the Sebastian Works in New York City. Large, expensive, and poorly designed - they were not able to hold baggage - the tableau wagons were a part of the larger "scheme to reconquer popularity" from the Ringling Bros. and other circuses who had moved into the gap left by Barnum & Bailey's European tour.¹⁹ While these new wagons would eventually parade through a number of towns, and to great acclaim, the season began without a parade. The streets of New York City were in a poor state, having been "torn and seamed and scarred" by the ongoing construction of the subway system, which had broken ground in March 1900, while the Barnum & Bailey circus was in Europe.²⁰ Bailey feared for the safety of his wagons, the city government for the safety of spectators, and so the grand spectacle of a parade Bailey had planned would have to wait until they took the show on the road. Even then, the number of late arrivals and missed

dates meant that the parade wagons did not see nearly as much use as was intended for them.

That the tableau wagons could not hold baggage was not the top concern of the employees and management of the circus. On the other hand, many of the Barnum & Bailey employees were less than happy with their circumstances, and in fact the new parade wagons certainly contributed to longer time requirements for loading and unloading.

On March 25, just one week after the show had opened in Madison Square Garden to great acclaim, the *Springfield Republican* reported that 72 horse drivers employed by the show had organized a Teamsters union.²¹ There are over 100

drivers listed in the route book.²² There seems to have been a gap in labor organizing activity after that – or at least a gap in reporting such activity - but the month of May became a period of non-stop challenges to Bailey's management. On May 11, the Boston Herald reported that the entire crew of bill posters for the show joined the local chapter of the Bill Posters' and Billers' Alliance of America.²³ The Duluth-News Tribune (reprinting from the New York Sun) reported on May 12 that the sideshow performers were demanding that they no longer be billed as "freaks" - either the advertising materials for the season would have to be destroyed and reprinted, or they would "adopt another plan of action." One performer, "Hugo the Giant", reported that he had been billed as an artist in his native France, and that his contract termed him an artist, and that he did not understand why he should not be advertised as such.²⁴ Whether this dispute was real to any degree is unclear, but public perception of internal circus affairs was affected, regardless, especially when taken in context of labor troubles.

Finally and most significantly, on May 12, the circus was delayed in leaving Washington, D.C. for Baltimore until daylight due to a strike by 150 canvasmen, who were asking for a \$5 per month raise. Forty policemen were sent to keep watch over the strike, which remained nonviolent, save for one punch. According to the Washington, D.C. *Evening Star*, the canvasmen were in the process of organizing a union.²⁵ Whether or not this strike was directly connected



Barnum & Bailey canvasmen are seen at work lacing sections of the big top in 1903 or 1904.

Charles Andress scrapbooks, Circus World Museum

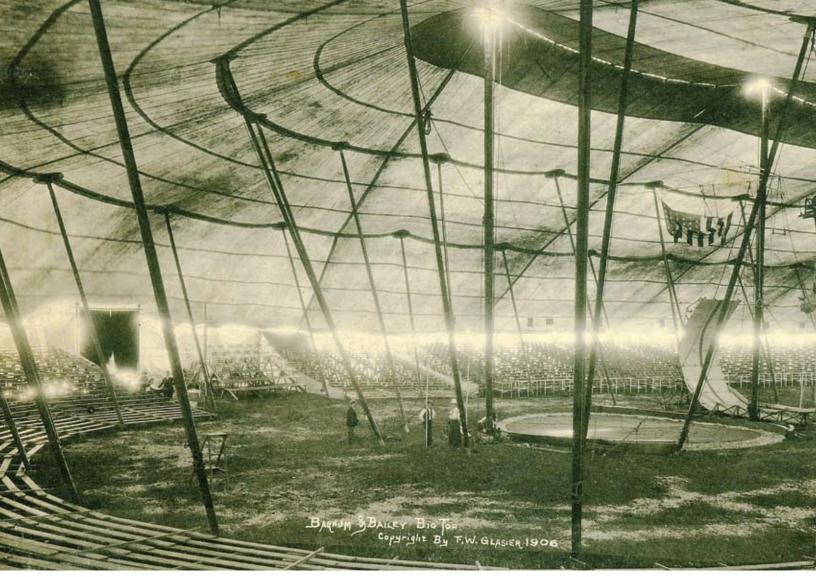
to the activity by the union formed in March is unknown, but labor struggles soon began to cast a shadow over the show. Considering the conditions under which the canvasmen were working, perhaps Bailey should have realized that having discontented employees was inevitable. Even before the canvasmen went on strike, putting up the big top had been extremely difficult. According to press releases, the new tent held nearly 15,000 spectators, (allegedly twice as many as previous seasons), and consisted of two-and-a-half acres of canvas supported by four 800-pound center poles and quarter poles weighing 400 pounds each. In reality, the tent was likely not significantly larger than those of previous seasons. Revertheless, the elements comprising it and particularly the seating within the tent weighed more than was customary or necessary.

Taking the show on the road from its opening in Madison Square Garden had proved to be more challenging than anticipated and set the stage for a strike. Even with assistance from the cooks, technicians, 300 horses and 30 elephants, the canvasmen could not get the big top in place in the time frame required. Bailey called for all employees of the circus – "from general manager to star" – to work at getting the canvas up.²⁷ While this managed to get the show running for the six-day stand in Philadelphia, the canvasmen, as well as the rest of the employees, soon realized the Quixotic nature

of Bailey's plans for the tour. In an attempt to alleviate the situation, at least once Bailey offered free tickets to citizens of the town the circus intended to visit in exchange for assistance in raising the big top. According to Bradna, this was because the situation had grown dire, but in reality, such assistance by locals was the norm.²⁸ In Philadelphia, this offer was gladly taken, mostly by hundreds of young men and boys.²⁹ For whatever reasons, Bailey did not always allow for this badly-needed assistance.

Businessmen from Shenandoah, Pennsylvania called the circus after hearing that their date had been canceled, gladly offering enough citizens to put up the tents, but management refused the offer.³⁰ According to the route book, the parade in that town was missed, but there was big attendance at the performances – shows that never happened, according to the newspaper accounts.

The strike by canvasmen continued, causing a number of missed dates and performances, and soon the situation grew dire enough that Bailey called in reinforcements, so to speak. On May 18, boss canvasman Charles McLean, one of Bailey's top men, arrived to handle the strike. McLean had to be retrieved from Europe, where he had been working on Buffalo Bill's Wild West. That night, at a stop between the Pennsylvania towns of Lancaster and York – where the show did not go on – a "large number" of employees quit the show



This spectacular 1906 view of the interior of the Barnum & Bailey performance tent shows much of the same seating first employed three years earlier, upon the show's return from Europe. The six-pole big top covered seating that included 24 rows

entirely.³²

By the end of May, the actions of the strikers were beginning to sour business with towns, as in one instance in Camden, New Jersey wherein an agent for the circus attempted to have the licensing fee waived because only one performance had been given. The mayor refused. "Managers of the circus deny the report that a strike was responsible for the delays," the *Inquirer* in Philadelphia reported. "Canvasmen on the ground say the whole trouble was due to a strike."³³

In almost every newspaper report of visits from Barnum & Bailey that season, Bailey was quoted as denying any strike was occurring, and that the delays and missed performances were simply the fault of the work being too much for the number of men the circus could carry with them. Bailey did put out advertisements in a handful of towns calling for laborers – both day laborers and full-time employees to replace those who had quit – but he usually got only a fraction of the men that he needed, only a handful of which were actually up to the gargantuan task.³⁴

On the national level, the fight for workers' rights had been growing exponentially since the arrival of the 20th cen-

tury. In 1902, President Theodore Roosevelt had ordered federal intervention in a labor dispute for the first time, personally presiding over the conference that would end the 163-day-long Anthracite Coal Strike in October of that year. While the final agreement did not require mine operators to recognize the United Mine Workers of America as a bargaining agent, it did require that they give union members equal representation on an arbitration board with the power to settle labor disputes. Mine operators had refused to officially recognize the union, for fear that they would gain too great a control over the industry.

In February of 1903, President Roosevelt formed the Department of Commerce and Labor, designed to resolve labor disputes in a manner that would also satisfy big businesses. Organized labor could even influence circus operations, at times. During the Ringling circus' two-week stand in San Francisco in 1903, one of its parades was cancelled in order to allow the Labor Day parade to march through.³⁵

It seems clear that Bailey was feeling the same fears as other industrial capitalists regarding the power of unions – if not on an industry level, certainly for his own business



of bleachers with footboards, reserved star-backs, and ringside box seats enclosed by metal piping. Note the automobile loop -the-loop apparatus and the three large flags ready for drops during the next show.

private collection

– while he had the additional problem of maintaining his business' reputation for creating wonder, whimsy, and all-around good feelings. The public was invested in the strike as well, fearing that it might spread to the performers, grinding the circus to a halt entirely. A June 3 article in the *New Yorker* included the following poem:

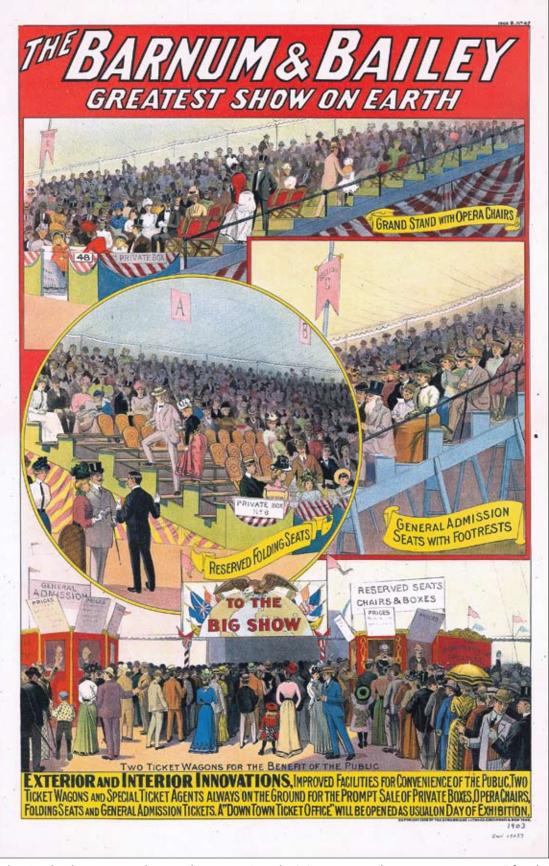
What care we for the subway strike, Or for the "L" train crews?
But woe is ours if to freak
The circus freaks refuse.
What, ho! ye walking delegate,
In whom all evils Lurk,
Come forth and face the populace.
Is this your ghastly work?³⁶

The strike brought a beleaguered Bailey, an intense manager who reports suggest had a nervous breakdown in the mid-1880s, additional stress that he feared he could not handle. In an unfinished biography of Bailey by his brother-in-law, Joseph T. McCaddon, he was described as on the verge of yet another nervous breakdown due to the "labor

troubles" of his organization.³⁷ It is no surprise, then, that in order to save face, sustain a necessary level of revenue and keep the strike at arm's length, Bailey repeatedly and publicly refused to recognize not only the unions formed in his circus, but also that any strike could ever occur within his organization.

None of these "incidents" were mentioned in the route book, and as previously noted, oftentimes the accounts of the route book and of newspapers contradict one another. Not only were these events excluded from the route book after the fact, but Bailey was incensed by it all, and worked hard to put out the public relations fires caused by reporting of the strike.

The canvasmen strike had been going on for nearly two months, and with plenty of newspapers reporting on it, when Bailey put out a rebuttal in trade papers, such as *Billboard* and the *New York Clipper*, on July 4 to what he claimed were unfounded rumors. Written by Bailey's personal representative, Louis E. Cooke, the rebuttal dismissed reports on the strike flatly as false: "There has never been a strike; there has never been a cause for a strike." Cooke also addressed the



This Strobridge poster advertised Barnum & Bailey's "Exterior and Interior Innovations" for the 1903 season, in particular the "French opera" style of seating for the reserved sections. The seating was remarkably heavy, and required a supporting steel framework, in a first for the circus.

Circus World Museum

Great Circus War claiming, "The rumours were set afloat by petty shows seeking to make capital of our expense."38 Cooke referred to the "harmony" among all employees and across all departments. In the article, Cooke admits, as Bailey had been doing in interviews on the road, to the logistical and equipment problems that plagued the circus that season. Cooke wrote of the "cumbersome" nature of the show. which some news sources claimed was the root of the issue, rather than wages.³⁹ Cooke set forth a laundry list of issues:

"The railroads have been strained to the utmost to handle our four trains, comprising 92 of the heaviest cars ever constructed... Then our new seating arrangements are the heaviest ever used... Instead of ropes, about the arena are used heavy nickel pipe rails. Our poles are immensely tall and equally heavy, and require horse as well as man power to erect them. We spread more canvas in our horse tents than is to be found in several of the advertised three ring shows, and our 'menagerie top' is larger than the 'big top' of any other circus."40

As any agent worth his salt would, Cooke spun these problems as amazements for the audience to behold and comforts in which to indulge – of course, that assumes that the show would overcome the problems caused by



The 1903 strike by Barnum & Bailey canvasmen almost caused the show to grind to a halt. Many of the workers either quit or were fired, causing Bailey for the first time to bring in African-American laborers from Virginia. Eleven such men comprised a sledge gang that rhythmically pounded down the wooden tent stakes.

Charles Andress scrapbooks, Circus World Museum

such spectacle, a feat which they often could not perform.

Bailey tried several methods of ending the strike and moving the circus forward. Previously mentioned was the retrieval of Charles McLean from Europe, whose arrival in the States preceded the mass exodus of 40 canvasmen. It is worth noting that McLean did not return to Europe and the Buffalo Bill show at the end of the season, instead remaining with Barnum & Bailey for the 1904 season to ensure that the show continued to run smoothly. Given that McLean's methods, whatever they were, were ineffective, Bailey recalled from Europe another of his top executives, associate director George O. Starr, to help him "extricate [the circus] from the trouble which encompass[ed] it." Starr decided that the best way to end the strike was to give the employees what they had asked for – a raise in wages.

"The country is more prosperous than ever before in its recent history, positions are more secure, wages are better, and men are more satisfied, Mr. Starr has decided, and bitter experience has shown it to Mr. Bailey. It has been impossible to lure men away to the hard and heavy work of the canvas, although the Barnum & Bailey circus is more considerate toward its employees than any organization of the character. ... There has been no strike as heralded through the East. The Barnum & Bailey show is now paying as high as \$1 an hour to the men who work on canvas and drive stakes. Phenominal [sic] rate of wages has finally almost filled the depleted ranks, and to-day the circus is agin [sic] on a definite working basis."⁴¹

Of course, the fact that many of the canvasman had been replaced must also have contributed to the end of the strike. On November 18, after the season had ended, a press agent for the show is quoted as saying that Bailey "imported a large force of Virginia negroes" for the first time, the work being too backbreaking for white men, according to him. 42

After the end of the strike, organized labor activity did not cease; in fact, it had grown stronger and begun to coalesce, perhaps due to the victory of the canvasmen. A July 27 article in the *Evening Transcript* out of North Adams, Massachusetts, noted that a union meeting was held that



Pictured here are employees of the John Robinson circus who were members of the Benevolent Order of American Tigers, a fraternal order consisting of many union members. This group comprised of circus folk of all kinds was re-chartered in 1903. Women were allowed membership, which was not unheard of in 1903, but was certainly notable.

The Ringling Museum, Tibbals Circus Collection

day in their town, wherein 65 new members – mostly canvasmen, one imagines – were inducted. The organization, called the Benevolent Order of American Tigers, was in fact being re-chartered in 1903, having been formed in 1898 on Barnum & Bailey's European tour. Employees from every department joined, from canvasmen to bosses, and did so, according to the article, with the approval of Bailey. The Order was a fraternal order, but acted in practice as a labor union and in conjunction with other unions, and also as an insurance body, paying for sick leave and hospital treatments. The article further notes that the Teamsters union held their meeting that day, and that these men were also members of the Order, and many other employees of the show were members of both a trade union and the Order.

Despite a rocky start and a tired Bailey, the Barnum & Bailey show made a small profit in 1903 - throughout the season, newspaper articles claim the circus was the biggest and best it had ever been, and that it drew record-breaking crowds in their respective communities. Although there was surely at least some hyperbole in these reports, there are other indicators that the 1903 season did not prove so disastrous in the end. Although it may have had little to do with any financial success that season, in May, it was reported that Bailey had purchased 40 acres of land in the New York City suburb of Mount Vernon - then occupied by the Siwanoy Golf Club – for between \$150,000 and \$175,000.45 In September, he approved plans to tear down the existing club-house and to build a Spanish-style mansion on the property costing \$150,000 and stables costing \$40,000 to \$50,000. With improvements such as roads, the total cost of construction of the estate, which Bailey would call The Knolls, was estimated to be \$300,000.46 This purchase being outside the operation of the circus, it is understandable that it was not mentioned

in the route book, but it does help us to better contextualize the events of the season.

While Barnum & Bailey circus may have limped along in 1903 - Bailey himself having inadvertently hobbled it the Ringling Bros. circus, gladly filling the vacuum which Bailey created, experienced a far happier season, despite a number of unfortunate events. The 1903 route book for the Ringling Bros. circus reflects this well, and was mar-

keted not only to the employees of the show, but also to the public at large as a souvenir.⁴⁷

The Ringling Bros. route book diary section for 1903 was far more comprehensive than Barnum & Bailey's, containing, as they put it, "an Account of Events of More or Less Importance."48 The route book was compiled sooner after the season than Barnum & Bailey's, and the Ringling show experienced a season overall more pleasant, so the book included a great deal more detail. Interestingly, that detail often included reports of accidents and mishaps, although most of these were relatively minor (as well as fewer in number) compared to the events taking place at the Barnum & Bailey circus. Moreover, in this case, it seems that more details about the season's events are included in the route book than are in the newspapers. One ventures to guess these incidents are included because the Ringlings felt far more confident about the season than did James A. Bailey; they claimed several times in the route book that it was the most successful season financially they had ever had.

Although the diary in the route book and the accounts given in newspaper reports are largely in line with each other, and a number of misfortunes are reported in the route book, there are still several that are omitted. Only one major pre-season incident seems to have occurred for the Ringling Bros., and just as with the Barnum & Bailey show, it is not to be found in the route book. On April 1, an Indian elephant called Sultan grew ill with something resembling a cold while traveling from winter quarters in Baraboo, Wisconsin to Chicago. The pachyderm died in his boxcar somewhere before reaching Chicago, where the show was soon to open.⁴⁹

Once on the road, the circus or individuals associated with it caused a stir in a number of towns. For example,

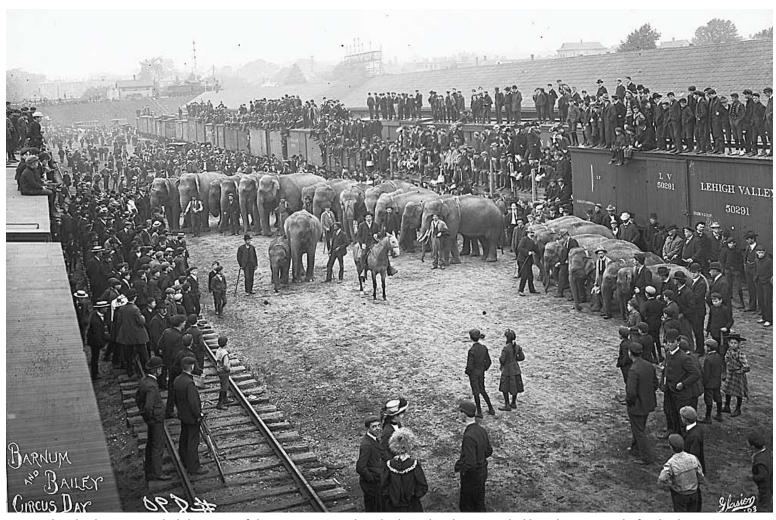
on July 2, an Illinois farmer sued the Ringling brothers for personal injury damages of \$1,000. The farmer, Aaron A. Clarno, claimed that advertisers for the show were throwing their bills "promiscuously" on the roads. The bills flying about frightened Clarno's horse and caused him to be thrown, sustaining a broken collar bone and other minor injuries. ⁵⁰ A few days later, Clarno settled with the Ringling brothers for the amount of \$174. ⁵¹ On September 12, a ticket seller named Will Cross got drunk in a number of saloons. In one, he took in a watermelon he had purchased and haphazardly began to cut it on the bar. The bartender ejected Cross, at which point Cross drew his pepper-box pistol and "threatened to shoot up the street."

Not surprisingly, because these events were relatively commonplace and could have damaged the Ringling Bros. show's reputation as a "Sunday School" circus, they were excluded from the route book. In addition, lawsuits such as Clarno's – as well as a number of such events that went unreported in route books – were likely seen as insignificant. "In any season there were typically dozens of beefs faced by the

circus, some legitimate and many not," circus historian Fred Dahlinger says. "Not mentioning them in the route book is akin to an annual report not mentioning all lawsuits being defended by the firm – only major ones rise to a level suggesting importance." ⁵³

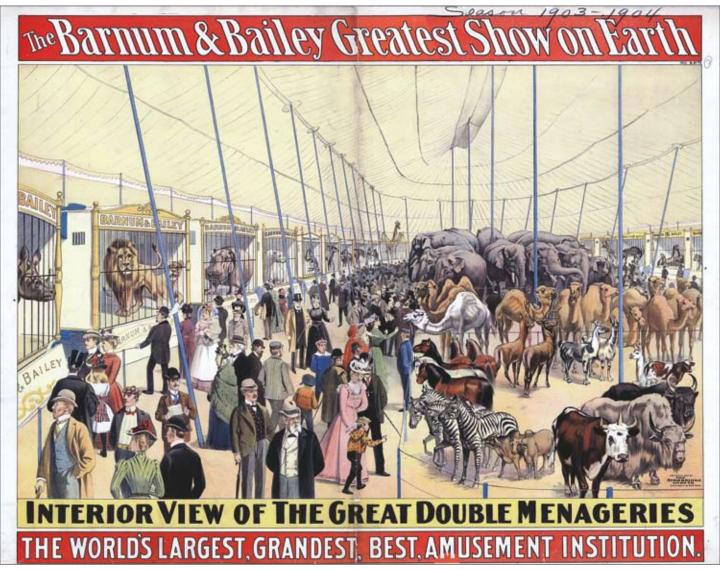
Maintaining a good reputation was important to the Ringling brothers, at least in part because it gave them a competitive edge. So it again comes as no surprise that they almost completely omitted the recurring problem of swindlers from the 1903 route book. More than one newspaper report specifically reassured those who might attend the circus that there should be no concern for being cheated at shell games or other types of gambling – a longtime concern of circus goers – as a corps of detectives was employed specifically to combat such crimes.⁵⁴

Greater than the threat of alleged gamblers, however, was a charlatan who was prowling the West Coast in June – at least in terms of the amount of money swindled. The comman, who most commonly used the alias "Harry Seaman," pretended to be an advance agent of the Ringling Bros.



Frederick Glasier recorded this view of the Barnum & Bailey elephant herd surrounded by a large crowd of onlookers. Despite being hampered by strikes, delays and other incidents during the first half of the season, the show did considerable business in 1903. Both the route book and newspaper accounts reported that the majority of dates had performances with turn-away crowds.

The Ringling Museum, Tibbals Circus Collection



Both the Barnum & Bailey and Ringling Bros. shows publicized large menageries with a wide variety of species in 1903. This one-sheet poster was designed and printed by Strobridge.

Circus World Museum

circus.⁵⁵ The exact operation of the scheme differs across reports, and likely differed in reality. In all cases, he would make expensive contracts with local merchants for supplies for the circus. In some towns, he allegedly took out loans as an advance for the supplies, pretending to have forgotten his money due to weariness from a long trip. ⁵⁶ In other instances, he required the merchants to pay him a fee to initiate the business contract.⁵⁷ In all instances, once he had his money, he would quickly disappear to the next town. Although the financial damage done by the conman was not often stated, in Seattle this crook managed to swindle as much as \$10,000.⁵⁸ It is unknown if he was ever apprehended. At this point in the season, the Ringling Bros. circus was touring Canada, and management may not have been aware of the events as they occurred - although it seems unlikely that they would not have learned about them before compiling the route book.

It is worth noting that the Ringling Bros. route book

does report on one instance of swindling by local criminals that was particularly bothersome. On September 30 and October 1 in Los Angeles, there was "considerable trouble" with scalpers, who were handled by the police. Two were arrested, others were driven off the lot, and "Captain Gould... threatened to whip the entire lot single-handed." In addition, "'ballyhoo' artists were placed at the street car depots to warn the public against them." ⁵⁹ Why the compiler(s) chose to report on this incident of swindling, and not of others, remains open to speculation.

The Barnum & Bailey circus also suffered considerably from crooks (particularly scalpers) that season, as evidenced in a number of reports including in their scrapbook of press clippings, but did not report on these incidents at all in the route book. Given that these crimes occurred outside the operation of – and were far from exclusive to – the circus, it is reasonable that these events were not reported on. Hat this demonstrates, however, is that one cannot expect to

build a complete narrative of any given circus season solely from the route book.

Just as with the Barnum & Bailey route book for 1903, there were also events that were misreported in newspapers - although they are significantly fewer in number. Strangely, there was at least one discrepancy in reporting that is difficult to explain. Both the route book and newspaper reports agreed that in the dark morning hours of August 6, near Ogden, Utah, an employee attempted to eject a hobo from a train car and the employee was shot. From here, the accounts differ. According to the route book, the employee was a watchman named Paul Spearing, and he was shot once in the right forearm. He was taken to the hospital, accompanied by the circus' surgeon, Dr. Arthur Gollmar, and his wound was dressed without removing the bullet.62 According to newspaper reports, the employee was named Charles Sullivan, and was shot twice, with one bullet piercing his lungs, killing him.⁶³ The name "Charles Sullivan" is not to be found in the roster included in the route book, but Paul Spearing

is listed as a watchman, consistent with the diary. Another diary entry for the weeklong engagement in Los Angeles in September noted that Paul Spearing returned to the show there.⁶⁴ It seems clear that it is the newspaper reports which are incorrect, but how the misreporting occurred is unknown.

There were also less significant discrepancies. One example of this was the route book entry for the Ringling show in Springfield, Illinois on July 11. That night there was a terrible thunderstorm, reportedly the worst of the season, and indeed one of the worst the show had ever experienced. Winds were remarkably high, with dangerous gusts, enough that they snapped a center tent pole in the menagerie in two and tore several holes in the big top canvas. This damage was reported in the route book, but not the newspaper, which was understandably more concerned with damage done to



This Glasier photograph shows one of the Barnum & Bailey ticket wagons in 1903. The raised panels above the sales windows bore a warning to circusgoers – "Beware of Pickpockets." Such illegal activity was a long-standing problem, but was rarely mentioned in circus route books.

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the town, especially the utility company.⁶⁶ The Daily Illinois State Journal noted that the performance was halted, and that crowds began to rush for the exits. The report also stated that the circus people declared "that there was no danger," as they attempted to calm the panicked audience.⁶⁷ The report in the route book differs, claiming that a portion of the performance continued in order to keep audiences in their seats. The Crusades spectacle was halted, but equestrian director Rhoda Royal made sure that the band continued to play, and bareback rider, Little Dallie Julian, performed on the hippodrome track, "although she expected the big top to bowl over any minute."

While Barnum & Bailey and Ringling Bros. were the two largest and most popular traveling circuses in 1903, the smaller circuses were in fact fighting each other more rabidly – although to some extent, these should be considered proxy



This Ringling Bros. billing stand in Troy, New York was evidence of the intensity of competitive advertising during the season of 1903.

Circus World Museum

wars. A journalist for the *Morning Star* in Rockford, Illinois, reported on May 14 on the ongoing Great Circus War, peppering the article with combat analogies. "Yesterday the real work of the combat was commenced," he reported, "though for several days past there have been side-line firings from both sides in the way of small stands of bills and banners," referring to advertising campaigns in the city by the Great Wallace and Forepaugh-Sells circuses. ⁶⁹ As noted earlier, the journalist who coined the term "Great Circus War" was pleased, as he believed the public would benefit. D. F. Lynch, the manager in charge of advertising for the Great Wallace circus, told the reporter that the circus benefited from the war as well, saying,

"It draws a larger crowd, though not in proportion to the additional expense. But the fact that a circus comes out ahead in the war is worth more in advertising than in the matter of dollars and cents for the fact is sent out broadcast and is worth much in the next stand as an advertisement."

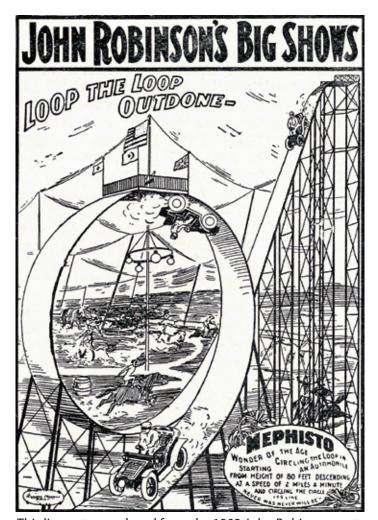
Lynch went on to note that the smaller circuses such as his benefited from the popularity of Barnum & Bailey and Ringling Bros., and the war they waged against each other. Many thousands of people were turned away when shows reached capacity, and so were eager to see the next circus that came to town.⁷¹

The Great Circus War, then, had greater stakes for the smaller circuses than the larger ones. Competition between the first and second-tier circuses could be tight. For example, when the Ringling show arrived in Youngstown, Ohio on May 20, it was the third show to arrive in eight days, following on the heels of the Great Wallace Shows and Walter L. Main Circus.⁷² The war was not seen as a merry one by all, however. In that same issue of the *Morning Star*, there is an article complaining of "the bill board nuisance." "The bill posters have made Rockford look like a veritable bedlam," the author grumbled. "Two circuses are competing and there is a natural rivalry as to the greatest and ugliest display." Unfortunately, he did not specify to which circuses he was referring. A sarcastic journalist writing for the *Daily Repub*-

lic in Rockford noted that the bill posters had missed their courthouse, the Carnegie library, and veteran's memorial hall, which was to be dedicated by the President in June. The reporter mockingly suggested that the bill posters ought to "... get the stand built from which President Roosevelt is to speak to the multitudes June 3 and let the circus men decorate that with flaring posters and gay bunting, on which is printed truths about the greatest show on earth."⁷⁴

A good example of a smaller, but still significant circus, was John Robinson's Ten Big Shows. For smaller circuses such as this one, the route book is certainly a significant resource. This does mean, however, that one must use the information in the route book with extra caution, as it becomes much more difficult to corroborate it. Still, the method of cross-referencing with reports does yield some interesting results. For example, just as with the Barnum & Bailey show, it seems the John Robinson circus had struggles with its labor force. However, they were likely less severe, given the lack of reporting on the subject, although this could simply demonstrate a lack of interest in the John Robinson show. The local paper in Bellefontaine, Ohio reported that during its visit to the town on the 30th of June, that 40 members of the show quit due to low wages.⁷⁵ Whether or not the circus' chapter of the Benevolent Order of American Tigers had any involvement in the dispute is unknown. The event went unmentioned in the route book. Another article in the newspaper reports that on the same night, an employee got drunk and stumbled into a train, sustaining a broken leg, and wounds on his arm and forehead. The John Robinson circus, attempting to put forth a morally upright reputation similar to the Ringling Bros. show, perhaps found it was in its best interest to omit that event from the route book as well.76

Several newspaper reports regarding the John Robinson circus make mention of the show's advertising practices. A journalist in Vincennes, Indiana claimed that the Great Circus War brought "the biggest advertising war ever conducted ... by two rival circus companies." The rivals in this instance were the John Robinson and Forepaugh-Sells shows. The latter's agents, arriving second, contracted for every space that was not already taken, including residential homes. Especially fierce was the battle for space on streetcars, telegraph and telephone poles, and even windows.⁷⁷ Certainly, the Great Circus War meant that the content of the advertising was being ramped up by all circuses, although the entire history of circus advertising is a history of hyperbole. The uniqueness and graphic design of the content on a circus poster was crucial. In February of 1903, the Supreme Court had ruled in the case of Bleistein v. Donaldson Lithographing Company that the circus poster qualified legally as a work of art, and was therefore, protected by copyright law. For the John Robinson show, the fact that the content of their advertising materials was both unique and mostly free from hyperbole was a major selling point. A journalist in Blooms-



This line-art reproduced from the 1903 John Robinson route book was drawn for a U.S. Lithograph Co. poster. Although loop the loop style acts were commonplace at the time, one had not been previously accomplished in an automobile.

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burg, Pennsylvania noted that the John Robinson show was a "true show," one that actually showed what they advertised:

"I was skeptical about that automobile looping the loop," said a well-known citizen as he emerged from the Horse Show building last night. "I thought that was all on paper, but when that daredevil they call the 'man from the moon' shot around the loop in his engine, I was willing to take off my hat to John Robinson's show."

One also wonders how the fierce bill-posting campaigns may have affected the behavior of circus agents. An article out of Emporium, Pennsylvania makes special note that advance man L. H. Heckman of the John Robinson circus was straightforward in his dealings and "a gentlemanly agent." "He knows just what he wants and gets that which pays his employer without splitting hairs," the journalist reported.⁷⁹ After the show had come and gone, a report in the same paper mentioned that, "Press Agent W. L. Wheeler was un-



Documented in this picture is the aftermath of a blowdown at the John Robinson show that occurred on August 5, 1903 in Eldorado, Illinois. If the route book is accurate, no injuries were sustained during this blowdown, and it was cleared in a matter of hours.

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tiring in his efforts to make all feel at home and found it no hardship to assist the ladies and children to get the best view of the animals and paint any features he thought might please them."⁸⁰

The most major event of the season was "the blowdown," as collapses of the canvas caused by storms were often called. Strangely, this author was not able to locate newspaper reports of the event, which occurred in Eldorado, Illinois on August 5. According to the route book, clouds began to gather during the afternoon performance, and at 4:45, soon after the crowds had cleared, a storm started to take shape. That storm soon became a double tornado, blowing down every tent. The route book claimed that the entire mess was cleared within two hours of the storm ending. There were no injuries reported.⁸¹

There was also a second blowdown, although the route book does not refer to it as such, playing its intensity down. Newspaper reports for this event claimed it as being far more serious. On September 7, in Anthony, Kansas, a windstorm swept through the town. According to the route book, the winds had been growing in strength over the course of the two-day engagement, which caused the menagerie tent never to be raised and the side show tent to be torn to ribbons and carried away.⁸² According to the newspaper reports, the menagerie tent had in fact been raised, and was occupied by a large crowd, when the poles and canvas were blown down. At least 100 people were injured in the disaster, 50 of which required medical attention. Cages were also blown over, landing on visitors, but no animals escaped.⁸³ Accidents and disasters are often well-accounted for in route books, but perhaps because of the significant injures to patrons at the show, compiler "Punch" Wheeler thought it better to gloss over this one.

As the winter set in and the circus season of 1903 came to a close, the effects of the "Great Circus War" could already be felt. Labor organizing, for example, was having a



Billposting was certainly crucial to every show's success. In 1906, lithographers were pasting up a poster as two young girls looked on.

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tangible effect on circus operations. The bill posters - one of the groups who served on the metaphorical front lines of the war - felt they deserved more if such combat was to continue. At the annual convention of the Bill Posters' and Billers' Alliance of America, held in Cincinnati in December, the two most significant topics on the table were a new uniform wage scale for advance agents (including bill posters) and home rule for local chapters. The circus industry was especially well represented; present were Peter Sells for the Forepaugh-Sells circus, advance managers Louis E. Cooke and W. H. Gardner of the Barnum & Bailey circus, W. E. Franklin of the Great Wallace circus, and several of the Ringling brothers.⁸⁴ The convention was a success; home rule was awarded, as well as an advance of \$15 per month from wages. 85 In addition, it was decided that going forward, all circus posters would have to be put up by union workers. 86 As for the Barnum & Bailey canvasmen, although their organized activity had ended months before, the echoes of those events were still rippling through the news, and still being denied. The previously mentioned November 18 article in which a show press agent discussed the "importation" of African-American laborers after the fact also denied that a strike had ever occurred.

In conclusion, the route books for 1903 are complicated historical sources indeed. The diaries of events they contain seem to have little rhyme or reason as to which events were recorded and which events were not, the manner in which certain events were portrayed, and which details were deemed significant by the compiler(s). Famously attributed to P. T. Barnum is the idea that all press is good press, but in 1903, that was clearly no longer the case. It seems as if this was a time of transition for the public relations aspect of circus management, and determining how best to maintain a circus's brand was not always easy.

That said, there can be no doubt that circus route books are invaluable sources of historical information – and not just for the study of the circus. Route books contain information regarding geography (on both a macro and micro scale), weather and climate, economics, race, gender, and more that might otherwise be overlooked. As with any other source, caution should be taken, and the route book should never be taken solely at face value.

It is also not lost on the author that this is an exceptionally small sample of sources representing an exceptionally unusual year, and therein only a smattering of events have been discussed.⁸⁷ More research should be done to determine the overall veracity of the circus route book as a historical source and how to best employ it, both in the study of circus history and in other topics.

Ultimately, as with all sources of historical information, the circus route book should be used in conjunction with a wide variety of other sources, and should neither be seen as inherently truthful or inherently dishonest, its veracity determined on a case-by-case basis. As always, not only should the information recorded be examined within its own historical context, but so should the source itself, including whatever details of its production and market may be known. Obviously, the events recorded in the diaries should be considered as parts of a larger historical narrative, extended beyond circus history and engaging with relevant historiography.

When considered in this broader context, the route book becomes an integral source in the study of circus history and beyond, despite any inherent flaws. The value of route books in genealogical and biographical research should also not be overlooked, as even if the specifics of events are not always reliable, the basic information found in a route book can prove invaluable in establishing a chronology of a particular person's life. 88 In the end, as long as the researcher employs them with care, the use of circus route books is certain to enrich many fields of historical scholarship. **BW**

Endnotes

Note: All newspaper articles sourced from GenealogyBank unless otherwise noted. Many came from the Barnum & Bailey press clippings scrapbook in the holdings of the Ringling Museum archives.

- 1. Jerry Apps, *Ringlingville USA* (Madison: Wisconsin Historical Press, 2005), p. 107.
- LeRoy Ashby, With Amusement for All: A History of American Popular Culture Since 1830 (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2006), p. 83.
- 3. Janet Davis, *The Circus Age: Culture and Society Under The American Big Top* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), p. 12.
- 4. Marcello Truzzi, "The Decline of the American Circus: The Shrinkage of an Institution," *Sociology and Everyday Life* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1968), pp. 315, 319, qtd. in Davis, *The Circus Age*, p. 7.
- 5. Muskegon Chronicle (Muskegon, Michigan), Jan. 20, 1903, p. 4.
- "Rivalry Between Circus Companies," Republican (Springfield, Massachusetts), Apr. 14, 1903, p. 8.
- 7. Harrisburg Patriot (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania), July 4, 1903, p. 5.
- 8. "Show Bills. Circus Man's Story of Paste and Billboard," *Repository* (Canton, Ohio), May 24, 1903, p.14. The route books for both Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey credit their opposition gangs. While the Barnum & Bailey route book credits the manager of the "opposition brigade," the Ringling Bros. route book refers to their crew only as a "special brigade."
- 9. The Circus Annual: A Route Book of Ringling Bros.' World's Greatest Shows, Season 1902 (Chicago: Central Engraving and Printing, 1902), p. 17, qtd. in Apps, Ringlingville USA, op. cit. p. 104.
- 10. "Help Up By Mayor Collins," Boston Herald, May 6, 1903, p. 12.
- "Says There Is No War," Boston Transcript, May 9, 1903, Barnum & Bailey Press Clippings, CM 240.272, p. 99, The Ringling Museum archives, Sarasota, Florida.
- 12. Fred Dahlinger, notes to the author, Aug. 2, 2017.
- 13. Nearly every article this author has located refers to the Great Wallace Shows as Wallace Bros., which is erroneous. There was, however, a later circus, unrelated to Great Wallace, which used this title.
- 14. "Fire at Circus Quarters," *New Haven Daily Morning Journal and Courier*, vol. LXIX No. 48, Feb. 25, 1903, p. 2. The flammable material differs by report, but is most often listed as "benzine" [sic].
- 15. Ibid. The insurance was mentioned in multiple newspaper articles

- about the event, although at least one source (the *Augusta Chronicle*) listed the amount as \$35,000 rather than \$33,000.
- 16. Barry Gray, *Day by Day with Barnum & Bailey Seasons 1903-1904* (Chicago: Charles Andress, 1905), p. 99.
- 17. Fred Bradna and Hartzell Spence, *The Big Top* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1952), p. 31.
- 18. New York Clipper, June 13, 1903, p. 374.
- 19. Greg Parkinson, "James A. Bailey's Last Parades 1903 and 1904," Bandwagon Vol. 61 No. 2 (2017), p. 46.
- 20. "Mr. Bailey Won't Parade," *Plain Dealer* (Cleveland, Ohio), Mar. 11, 1903, p. 4.
- Springfield Republican (Springfield, Massachusetts), Mar.25, 1903, p.
- 22. Barry Gray, *Day by Day*, op. cit., pp. 17-19. The list is in the 1904 section, and this author assumes the list also represents the staff of the 1903 season. The section of the route book for 1903 lists only the staff responsible for the museum and side show for that season.
- 23. Boston Herald, May 11, 1903, p. 3.
- 24. "Ultimatum of the Prodigies," *Duluth News-Tribune*, May 12, 1903, p. 4. The only giant billed with the show that season was not named "Hugo," but Capt. George Auger, so this report is either inaccurate or fabricated. A similar event occurred in 1898-99 during the show's stay at the Olympia in London, which John Lentz argued was completely devised as a public relations stunt by press manager R. F. "Tody" Hamilton. See John Lentz, "The Revolt of the Freaks," *Bandwagon*, Sept./Oct. 1977, pp. 26-29. More recent scholarship is conflicted on the issue, sometimes seeing the dispute as at least partially in earnest. See Michael Chemers, *Staging Stigma: A Critical Examination of the American Freak Show* (New York: Palgrave McMillan, 2008), Ch. 4 "Pathology and Prodigy."
- "Circus Laborers Strike," Evening Star (Washington, D.C.), May 13, 1903, p. 17.
- 26. Greg Parkinson, discussion with the author, Dec. 11, 2018.
- 27. Bradna and Spence, op. cit., p. 30.
- 28. Greg Parkinson, discussion with the author, op. cit.
- 29. Ibid.
- 30. Freeland Tribune (Freeland, Pennsylvania), May 22, 1903, p. 5.
- 31. "Barnum & Bailey's Show Again Performing and Turning Away Crowds Hiring More Men," *Patriot* (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania), Vol. 88 No. 117, May 19, 1903, p. 6. The name is spelled "McClain" in the article, but as "McClean" in the route book. The commonly accepted spelling among scholars is "McLean."
- 32. "Hard Luck Still Follows Big Show," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Vol. 148 No. 140, May 20, 1903, p. 3.
- 33. "Big Circus Struck Snags in Camden," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Vol. 148 No. 151, May 31, 1903, p. 5.
- 34. "Green Hands Tie Up Show," *Topeka State Journal*, May 20, 1903, Barnum & Bailey Press Clippings, CM 240.272, p. 91, The Ringling Museum archives, Sarasota, Florida. A number of articles found both in the press clippings and in online repositories discuss the problem of green laborers.
- 35. The Circus Annual: A Route Book of Ringling Brothers World's Greatest Shows, Season 1903 (Chicago: Central Printing and Engraving, 1903), p. 68.
- 36. "The Circus Strike," *The New Yorker*, June 3, 1903, Barnum & Bailey Press Clippings, CM 240.272, p. 96, The Ringling Museum archives, Sarasota, Florida.
- 37. "New Light on the Life of James A. Bailey," *Bandwagon* Vol. 61 No. 2 (2017): p. 44.
- 38. "Barnum & Bailey Notes," New York Clipper, July 4, 1903, p. 438.
- 39. Parkinson, "James A. Bailey's Last Parades 1903 and 1904," op. cit., p. 47.
- 40. "Barnum & Bailey Notes," New York Clipper, op. cit., p. 438.
- 41. "Circus Proves Our Prosperity," New York Evening Telegram, June 2, 1903, Barnum & Bailey Press Clippings, CM 240.272, p. 91, The

- Ringling Museum archives, Sarasota, Florida.
- 42. "Effect of Prosperity," *Detroit Free Press*, Nov. 18, 1903, Barnum & Bailey Press Clippings, CM 240.272, p. 338, The Ringling Museum archives, Sarasota, Florida. The press agent, George Bowles, is not to be found in the roster in the route book. The article claims he had left the show two months prior, so it is possible that he was accidentally left off the roster. An earlier article from May out of Fitchburg, Massachusetts also makes the claim about hiring African-American laborers, with no direct quote.
- Billboard, Jan. 16, 1904, p. 9, "Excerpts From Billboard 1904-1906," Circus Historical Society, http://www.circushistory.org/History/Bill-board1904.htm.
- 44. "Union of Circus Employes [sic] Is Order Of American Tigers," North Adams Evening Transcript, July 27, 1903, Barnum & Bailey Press Clippings, CM 240.272, p.135, The Ringling Museum archives, Sarasota, Florida.
- 45. Morning Star (Rockford, Illinois), May 30, 1903, p. 6.
- 46. Evansville Courier and Press (Evansville, Indiana), Sept. 30, 1903, p. 4; Plain Dealer (Cleveland, Ohio), Sept. 30, 1903, p. 4; and Richmond Times Dispatch, Oct. 2, 1903, p. 4. The cost of the stables varies by report.
- 47. The Circus Annual: A Route Book of Ringling Brothers World's Greatest Shows, Season 1903, op. cit., p. 12.
- 48. The Circus Annual: A Route Book of Ringling Brothers World's Greatest Shows, Season 1903, op. cit., p. 57.
- 49. "Sultan' Is No More," Seattle Daily Times, Apr. 2, 1903, p. 5.
- 50. Rockford Daily Register-Gazette (Rockford, Illinois), July 2, 1903, p. 2.
- 51. Rockford Morning Star (Rockford, Illinois), July 8, 1903, p. 5.
- 52. San Francisco Chronicle, Sept. 12, 1903, p. 9.
- 53. Dahlinger, notes to the author, op. cit.
- 54. Daily Illinois State Register (Springfield, Illinois), June 28, 1903, p. 2.
- 55. In at least one instance in early May, the conman had pretended to be with the Forepaugh-Sells circus. "Was 'Ahead of A Circus," *Oregonian* (Portland, Oregon), May 7, 1903, p. 14.
- 56. San Francisco Call Bulletin, Vol. 94, June 5, 1903, p. 8.
- 57. Tacoma Daily News, July 1, 1903, p. 2.
- 58. Ibid.
- 59. The Circus Annual: A Route Book of Ringling Brothers World's Greatest Shows, Season 1903, op. cit., p. 70.
- 60. Reports of ticket scalpers, pickpockets and other crooks are numerous in the Barnum & Bailey Press Clippings, CM 240.272, The Ringling Museum archives, Sarasota, Florida.
- 61. Dahlinger, notes to the author, op. cit.
- 62. The Circus Annual: A Route Book of Ringling Brothers World's Greatest Shows, Season 1903, op. cit., p. 66.
- 63. "Circus Employe [sic] Is Fatally Shot," *Evening News* (San Jose, California), Vol. XLIV No. 39, Aug. 7, 1903, p. 8.
- 64. The Circus Annual: A Route Book of Ringling Brothers World's Greatest Shows, Season 1903, op. cit., p. 70.
- 65. Ibid., p. 64.
- 66. "Panic Seizes Circus Crowd," *Daily Illinois State Journal* (Springfield, Illinois), July 12, 1903, p. 3.
- 67. Ibid.
- 68. Circus Annual, The Circus Annual: A Route Book of Ringling Brothers World's Greatest Shows, Season 1903, op. cit., pp. 64-65. The route book spells the performer's name as "Dollie," but the generally accepted spelling today is "Dallie."
- 69. "Circus War Is On In Rockford," *Rockford Morning Star* (Rockford, Illinois), May 14, 1903, p. 3.
- 70. Ibid.
- 71. Ibid.
- 72. The Circus Annual: A Route Book of Ringling Brothers World's Greatest Shows, Season 1903, op. cit., p. 59.
- 73. "The Bill Board Nuisance," *Rockford Morning Star* (Rockford, Illinois), May 14, 1903, p. 4.

- 74. "Circus Men Overlook a Bet Fail To Put Bills On Memorial Hall and Carnegie Building," *Rockford Daily Republic* (Rockford, Illinois), May 14, 1903, p. 1.
- 75. Bellefontaine Republican (Bellefontaine, Ohio), Vol. 49, July 3, 1903, p. 4.
- 76. John Robinson was known for cutting shows short, often without explanation, but reports from 1903 stress moral and clean entertainment, similar to the Ringling Bros.
- 77. "Posters Cover the Entire Town," *Evansville Courier and Press* (Evansville, Indiana), July 12, 1903, p. 3.
- 78. "Crowds at the Circus," *Bloomsburg Columbian* (Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania), Vol. 38, June 4, 1903, p. 7.
- 79. "A Gentlemanly Agent," *Cameron County Press* (Emporium, Pennsylvania), Vol. 38, June 4, 1903, p. 2.
- 80. "The Big Circus Came," *Cameron County Press* (Emporium, Pennsylvania), Vol. 38, June 18, 1903, p. 2.
- 81. W. L. "Punch" Wheeler, *John Robinson's Ten Big Shows Nineteen Hundred and Three Seventy-Ninth Year* (Evansville, Indiana: Keller Printing and Publishing, 1903), pp. 51-52.
- 82. Ibid., p. 133.
- 83. "Wind Wrecks Circus and Causes Panic," *Rocky Mountain News* (Denver, Colorado), Sept. 8, 1903, p. 11.
- 84. "Billers," Cincinnati Post, Dec. 7, 1903, p. 3.
- 85. "National Bill Posters Agree On New Wage Scale for Advance Circusmen," *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, Dec. 10, 1903, p. 12. "Bill Posters Give Home Rule to All Locals," *Cleveland Leader*, Dec. 9, 1903, p. 2.
- 86. "Will Do Circus Posting," *Daily People* (New York, New York), Dec.12, 1903, p. 1.
- 87. Although only three route books from 1903 are directly quoted in this paper, four were examined, the fourth being that of the Great Pan-American Shows. A lack of space led to the omission of the fourth route book, but the cross-referencing of reports yielded similar results to the other three.
- 88. Route books do not always provide a complete roster of personnel. It is possible that those who left early in the season were not listed. One way to determine the completeness of the roster would be to cross-reference it with the cash books for that season if they exist. Also, in some cases, such as the 1903 route book for John Robinson's Ten Big Shows, only a roster of managerial staff is provided.

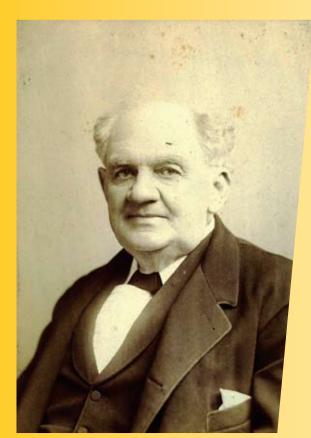
About the Author

William J. Hansard is a Ph.D. student in the Transatlantic History program at the University of Texas at Arlington. His research interests include history of popular culture, public history, and historical geography. His dissertation

will explore labor in the traveling circus in the Gilded Age and Progressive Era. William's research has been highly diverse, including two award-winning papers. The first was about Mirabeau B. Lamar and his push for public education in the Republic of Texas, and the other was about the role of the Walt Disney Archives in building and branding the Disney company.

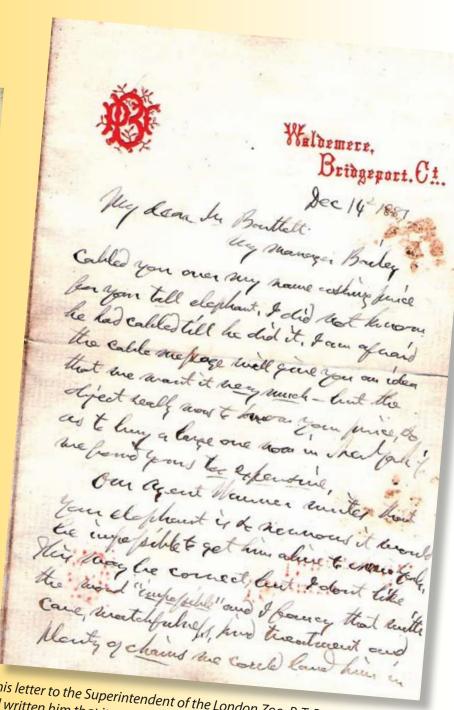


Depred by P. T. Barra



P. T. Barnum was a principal throughout the negotiations to acquire the "tall elephant" from the London Zoo. The great showman reveled in the free publicity that "Jumbomania" caused on both sides of the Atlantic.

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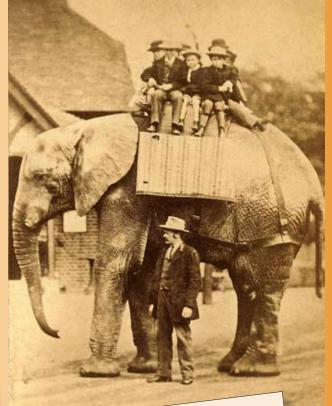


In this letter to the Superintendent of the London Zoo, P. T. Barnum noted his agent had written him that it would be impossible to get Jumbo to New York alive. However, Barnum went on to say, "... but I don't like the word impossible..." He requested that Abraham Bartlett write back with "the lowest sum in cash that will buy him..." The sale was finalized on February 19, 1882.

Jumbo was born in Sudan in northeast Africa, toward the end of 1860. After short stays in Germany and then a zoo in Paris, the young male arrived in London on June 26, 1865. He soon began to give rides under the watchful eye of his assigned "keeper," Matthew Scott. This photograph was taken in front of the refreshment stand at the Regents Park zoo in the early 1870s. Jumbo was not yet fullgrown, although his long legs are apparent.

private collection

her pok. But theye you ideas coste funce will be moderate in which cade I would like to try the experiment. If you will handly winte us the Conest Dans in cash that will buy him, orbe your ideas about his truper, age I what feet dutinged. · Our agent, addrep is de J.E. Warner At of 87 Baumun 46 C/o Detroit Free fress Landon, I am gente well and cheerful, as & surcerely hope you and. Many Justy years 17. Maunum Steven J. Peters Enterprises Inc. (St. Thomas, Ontario, Canada)



Dec 14th 1881

My dear Mr. Bartlett

My manager Bailey called you over my name asking price for your tall elephant. I did not know he had called till he did it. I was afraid the cable package will give you an idea that we want it very much - but the object really was to know your price, so as to buy a large one now in New York if we found yours too expensive.

Our agent Warner writes that your elephant is so nervous it would be impossible to get him alive to New York. This may be correct, but I don't like the word "impossible" and I fancy that with care, watchfulness, kind treatment and plenty of chains we could land him in New York. But I hope your ideas as to price will be moderate, in which case I would like to try the experiment. If you will kindly write us the lowest sum in cash that will buy him, also your ideas about his temper, age, etc. If you conclude to sell him, I shall feel obliged.

Our agent address is Mr. J. E. Warner Agt of P. T. Barnum & Co

C/o Detroit Free Press 325 Strand London.

I am quite well and cheerful, as I sincerely hope you are.

Very Truly Yours

P. T. Barnum

Reprinted from The New York Times of April 10, 1882

JUMBO LANDED IN SAFELY

HE CELEBRATES HIS ARRIVAL IN A BOTTLE OF WHISKY.

THE HUGE BEAST VIEWED BY THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE—EIGHT HORSES UNABLE TO MOVE THEBOX—ELEPHANTS CALLED INTO SERVICE—JUMBO QUIET AND LAMB-LIKE AFTER HIS VOYAGE.

Messrs. P. T. Barnum, James L. Hutchinson, James A. Bailey, George S. Bailey, George S. Leland, Richard F. Hamilton, Col. M. F. Young and a few newspaper reporters shivered in the raw atmosphere of Castle Garden pier at an early hour yesterday morning, and stared at the steam-ship Assyrian Monarch, which was anchored in midstream. The famous elephant Jumbo was on board this vessel, and it was agreed by the party on the pier that the whole world was breathlessly awaiting intelligence of the beast's health and state of mind. Mr. Barnum was in an unusually happy mood, and assured the party that the event recalled the arrival of Jenny Lind in this country many years ago. Then he rattled off numerous anecdotes concerning the great singer. The small steamer Only Son have in sight, and the enthusiasm of the party increased as the prospect of beholding Jumbo became more apparent. In a few moments the party was safely on board the Only Son, and Mr. Barnum began to explain that elephants are never sick at sea and that therefore Jumbo would not be found under the care of a physician.

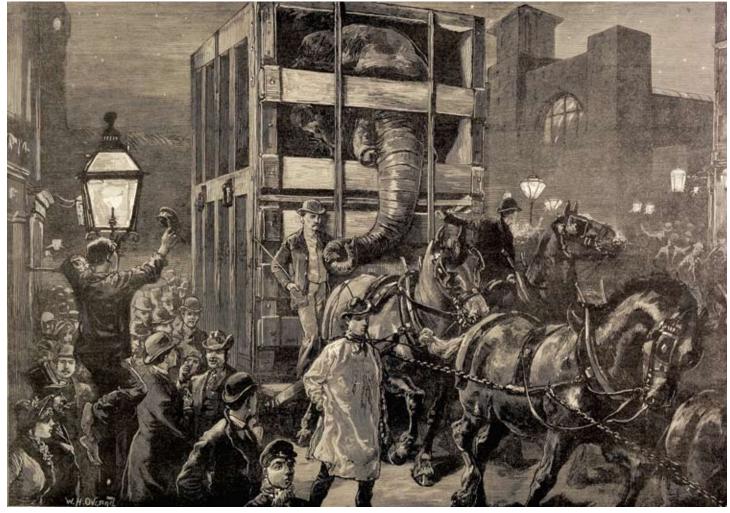
Cap. John Harrison, of the Assyrian Monarch, welcomed his guests, and informed Mr. Barnum that Jumbo had behaved grandly through the voyage. Then the party descended a gangway to what was called the shelter deck. Here William Newman, sometimes called "Elephant Bill," was found. Mr. Newman had been sent to London in January for the purpose of accompanying Jumbo to this country. Like all elephant trainers he is excessively modest in the presence of human beings, and blushed like a school-girl when Mr. Barnum congratulated him on his safe arrival. "Where's Scott?" shouted the veteran showman, and everybody took



It took time to acquaint Jumbo with the crate that would house him during the voyage to New York. The wooden box wasstrengthenedwithmetalbarbrackets and reinforcements bolted to structural oak timbers. With the large African elephant are Matthew Scott (holding basket) and William "Elephant Bill" Newman, the American trainer sent to assist Scott with Jumbo's transfer to the United States.

Zoological Society of London

up the cry, "Where's Scott?" The modest little man who owned this name quickly made his appearance. He has been with Jumbo since 1865 and this is his first visit to America. The party were led to the hatchway between the main and the upper decks, where Jumbo stood in a great iron-bound box. The beast's trunk was swung aloft on the outside, as though in expectation of buns or fruit, such as the children used to supply him in the Royal Zoological Gardens in London. The merest glance at the beast showed that he was of immense size, but upon closer inspection it was seen that he has extraordinarily long legs, and that his great height is due to their length. His countenance was as expressionless as the countenance of all elephants. His ears were of unusual size, and it was said that when they are spread like an eagle's wings they measure 15 feet from tip to tip. The tusks were not visible, having been lost years ago in a battle with an iron door. Everybody, of course, asked the question, "What is his height?" and Elephant Bill quietly replied, "Eleven and a half." Some in the party thought that Jumbo was scarcely taller than the tallest of those in the herd at Madison-Square Garden. Mr. Barnum came to the rescue of those who seemed disappointed in the elephant's height by saying that it should be understood that there is a considerable difference between the actual and the "museum" height of elephants. Eleven and half feet, he said, was the actual height of Jumbo. Then everybody was happy, and looked with increased pride upon the beast. The box in which Jumbo was incased was said to be 12 1/2 feet high, 13 feet long, and 6 feet wide, and to all appearances he had abundance of room in which to swagger as all elephants swagger. The box and



Matthew Scott rode with Jumbo as he left the zoo on March 22, 1882. The crate was towed through the streets of the city to St. Katherine's Dock for loading on a barge on the Thames River. Along the way, Londoners cheered and jeered.

Illustrated London News, The Ringling Museum, Tibbals Circus Collection

elephant weighed together 12½ tons.

Notwithstanding Mr. Barnum's assertion that elephants are never sick at sea, it was reported in the surgeon's books that Jumbo was decidedly "under the weather" during seven days of the trip. It was said that he hung his trunk on the bar in front of his box in a listless way and refused his usual rations during those days. The vessel stopped at Gravesend just after leaving London and a thorough inspection of its seaworthiness was had. It was here that the Baroness Burdett-Coutts went aboard and remained for over an hour looking at Jumbo. She brought with her some sweetmeats for the beast and spoke affectionately of him as "poor Jum-

bo." The room on the shelter and main decks which might have been occupied by 600 emigrants, was cleared in consequence of placing Jumbo's box in the hatchway between these decks. The vessel carried 409 emigrants and 18 cabin passengers. On the first day out Jumbo was much excited and trumpeted a great deal. On the second day he subsided and began to show signs of illness. After seven days he had fully recovered, and was able to partake of hay, oats, bread, fruit and onions with much relish. Mr. Scott and Mr. Newman watched him closely, and had two assistants. Jumbo was never alone. Mr. Newman said that a lady sent 12 dozen fine oysters for Jumbo, and that he (Mr. Newman) and Mr. Scott



A tugboat towed the small barge with Jumbo's crate to the Millwall Docks where it would be loaded onto the moored steamship.

The Illustrated London News, April 1, 1882

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A large dockside hoist lifted Jumbo and his crate onto the Assyrian Monarch, the steamship that transported the famous elephant across the Atlantic for his rendezvous with the American public.

Tower Hamlet's Local Library and Archive (London)

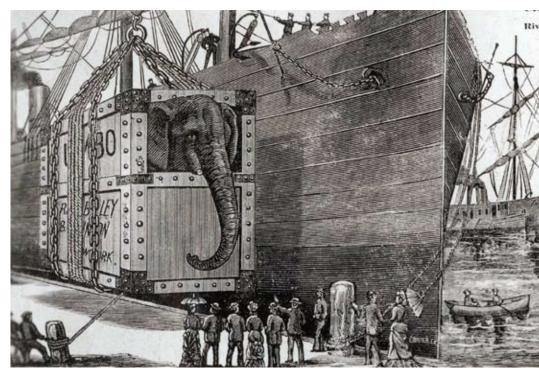
enjoyed them. A great many packages of food, bottles of champagne and beer were also sent by kind-hearted women and children for Jumbo's use, and the beast freely partook of the liquid refreshments. When Mr. Barnum heard this and remembered that he is an apostle of temperance, he said: "I am afraid Jumbo has been too liberally supplied with beer for many years." Then he looked at Mr. Scott, Jumbo's keeper, and remarked, "That animal's growth has been stunted by the use of beer." Mr. Scott shook his head in a negative way, and as everybody laughed, First Officer Kidder said, "Why, Jumbo is as fond of whisky as he is of beer." "Oh, no," said Mr. Barnum sadly, "don't say that." "If you don't believe it, I'll prove it to you," replied Mr. Kidder, and he hastily procured a bottle of whisky. Removing the cork from the bottle he poured the contents into the mouth of Jumbo's trunk. The elephant stood motionless and apparently in raptures until the last drop was emptied from the bottle. Then Jumbo curled his trunk up to his capacious mouth and poured the whisky into it. Then he shook himself like a man who had been searching for his morning cocktail, and had at last been comforted by procuring it. "I protest, I protest!" shouted Mr. Barnum, but it was too

Then everybody asked questions, and were told marvelous stories about the enormous expense of transporting Jumbo from London to this port. Mr. Barnum said that the purchase of Jumbo and the expenses attending the lawsuits in London, his fare on the steam-ship, the cost of exclud-

ing so many emigrants from the vessel, and countless other expenditures, would amount to fully \$30,000. No duty would be paid on the elephant at this port, as Mr. Barnum had procured an order from the Secretary of the Treasury permitting him to land Jumbo without paying duty for him. "I paid £2,000 for Jumbo for breeding purposes," said Mr. Barnum, "and would not in the first instance have paid \$3,000 for him for show purposes. If there had not been so much fuss made about him in London I would not have been so anxious to get him." Then Mr. Barnum explained that it was perhaps known to all of his hearers that the "Jumbo craze" in England had no parallel in either ancient or modern history. Everybody in the British Isles talked or wrote of Jumbo, and his departure was looked upon as a public calamity. Women and children wept, and old men bowed

the heads in grief. Royalty was shocked. Poets sang Jumbo's praises, and artists illustrated books filled with events in the life of the best-known elephant in the world. Everybody, from royalty to the lowest depths of London wore jumbo scarf-pins and sleeve-buttons, and the people dreamed of him. To all this Mr. Scott and Mr. Newman nodded assent. Then they told of the bags of letters which they had received from weeping women and children who wrote to beg them to carefully watch over "poor Jumbo." Mr. Scott showed a photograph of Jumbo and himself taken when the beast was 4 years of age. Then Mr. Scott was taller than the elephant. The keeper's eyes were watery as he displayed the picture. He admitted, when Mr. Barnum spoke of it, that after Jumbo had been purchased by the American showman something like \$50,000 was received at the Royal Zoological Gardens from those who desired to see Jumbo. Passage for Jumbo was first engaged on the Persian Monarch. Then Jumbo declined to make the trip, and this aroused the affectionate interest of all England. Mr. Barnum's agent, Mr. Davis, then secured passage for Jumbo in the Egyptian Monarch, and the lawsuits prevented this trip. At length the Assyrian Monarch was engaged to carry the beast, and the trip was made.

While Mr. Barnum and his party continued to gaze at Jumbo, small boats were conveying from the New-York shore persons who had tickets of invitation to see Jumbo. Mr. D. O'Connor, the Passenger Agent of the Monarch Line of steam-ships, arrived with a large party, and later S. Edward Mott, the stalwart showman of Mr. Barnum's establishment, made his appearance. Then Superintendent Hartfield, of the Society of the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, with an officer of that society, arrived and were shown to Jumbo's

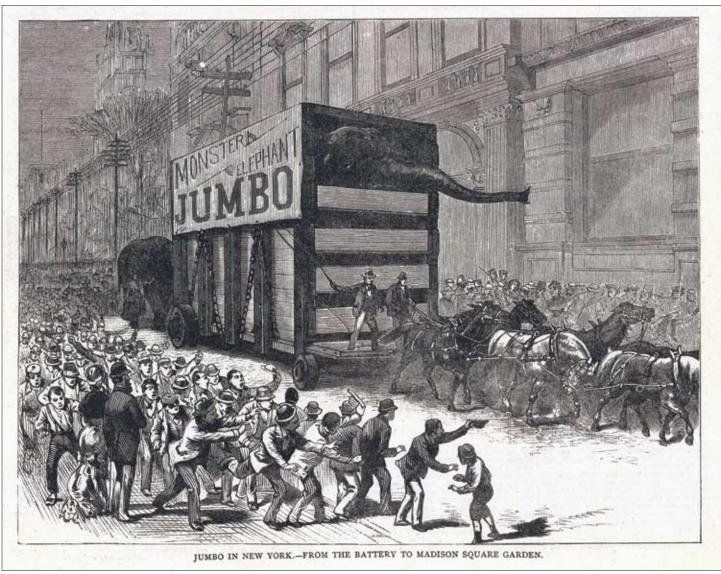


After 14 days at sea, Jumbo arrived in Jersey City.

Circus World Museum

quarters. Everybody desired to know whether Jumbo was of a peaceful disposition, and Mr. Barnum assured them that he was "perfectly lamb-like," adding that he was the idol of the children. One of the other showmen said that he doubted Jumbo's lamb-like disposition, and gave a bit of information which he had picked up from one of the crew. According to the seafaring man, Mr. Scott, Jumbo's keeper, was afraid to enter the box during the voyage in order to clean it, and Mr. Newman, the American trainer, tried the plan adopted by elephant trainers in this country. He prodded Jumbo with a hook such as trainers use, and spoke very harshly to the animal. The astonished beast stood aside, and permitted Mr. Newman to clean the box at his pleasure. It seems that during all the time he has been with Jumbo Mr. Scott has never used even a whip upon him, and that the elephant has frequently taken advantage of Mr. Scott's kindness of heart and displayed a strong disposition to do as he pleased. Mr. Hutchinson, Mr. Barnum's partner, thought that Mr. George Arstingstall, the trainer of the herd of elephants in the Madison-Square Garden, would soon subdue Jumbo. Mr. Arstingstall has very fixed opinions about elephants. He has no faith in the good effects of being kind to them, and never attempts to romp with them.

At noon the steam-ship was yet in midstream, and everybody asked whether it was the intention to land Jumbo during the day. Mr. Barnum was confident that Jumbo would be greeted by the herd of 22 elephants in the Madison-Square Garden sometime in the afternoon. Mr. Hutchinson then discovered that the Captain of the lighter, which was to hoist Jumbo's box from the vessel, had not arrived, and, upon inquiry, learned that the Captain had been informed



that his services would not be required until today. At once murmurs of disapproval were heard on all sides. Mr. James A. Bailey requested Mr. Hutchinson to engage a tug and go on a cruise in search of the Captain of the lighter. Mr. Hutchinson learned that the Captain lived at Greenpoint, and immediately sailed for that port. Capt. Harrison suggested that it was about time for the steam-ship to enter her dock alongside the Pavonia Ferry, Jersey City, and after the usual courtesies between the officers the steam-ship made its way to the pier. The parting of a hawser diverted attention from Jumbo for a few minutes. When the vessel was made fast, after much shouting upon the part of the officers and crew, a large number of persons bearing tickets of invitation were admitted on board the vessel. One o'clock had been reached, and Mr. Barnum locked arms with Mr. Leland and said, "Drawn or undrawn poultry is good enough for me, George." Then they disappeared down the gangway to the pier, and were not again seen near the vessel during the day. Capt. Harrison and Purser Lloyd invited the remaining showmen and the newspaper men to a splendid dinner in the saloon, and the health of Jumbo was drank in many glasses of champagne.

Following lengthy preparations and much commotion, the trek toward Madison Square Garden began. Jumbo's American adventure was underway. During his fourth season with the Barnum & London Circus, the elephant was struck and killed by an unscheduled freight train in St. Thomas, Ontario. At the time of the accident, Jumbo was still growing.

Canadian Illustrated News, Circus World Museum

Mr. Hutchinson's voyage after the Captain of the lighter was a long one, and fears were at one time entertained that he had been shipwrecked. At about 3:30 o'clock the welcome intelligence was received that the Captain of the lighter had been captured. Then all hands were piped on deck. Steam was gotten up on the lighter, and the hatches over Jumbo's box were removed. By this time the neighboring sheds on the piers were black with men and boys, and it was said that fully 10,000 persons were standing around the Battery, eager for a look at Jumbo or the box containing him. The lighter was brought alongside the steam-ship and great chains were hauled to the deck of the latter vessel. Then men began to wonder whether the chains would break, and they eyed the ropes with suspicion. Showmen and newspaper men crowded around the hatchway and looked down at Jumbo,

whose trunk was swaying to and fro in the space in front of his box. Some one [sic] poured a bottle of port wine into the mouth of his trunk, saying that the wine would steady his nerves. Jumbo winked as he tossed off the beverage, and seemed refreshed. By 4:30 o'clock much ado was made about putting the chains around his box, and the spectators judged from the way in which he swaggered that he was becoming unduly excited. When Mr. Scott's old familiar face appeared at the front of the box, however, Jumbo seemed assured that everything was all right. Small boys in some mysterious manner had got on board the steam-ship and had climbed into the rigging. The youngsters occasionally gave vent to their feelings in cheers for Jumbo. Two men engaged in a fight on the spar deck, and Capt. Harrison at once aserted [sic] that his vessel had been boarded by New-Jersey desperadoes. The fight was stopped, but the spectators had been worked up to fever heat, and they predicted that Jumbo would become so enraged by the noise around him that he would break from his box, and sweep everything before him. It was counted upon as almost certain that when the box was hoisted high above the deck of the vessel and was swung to one side so that it might be lowered to the deck of the lighter, the ropes or chains would break. While in this unhappy frame of mind the spectators were startled by a crash of wood. The signal had been given to the engineer of the lighter to "hoist away, "and as the chains around the box were drawn tightly together the edges of the box were torn. "Stop her," was shouted by a thousand voices. Capt. Harrison and Mr. Farini stood on the roof of the box. The position of the chains was changed, and amid a stillness that savored of the few moments before the hanging of a human being the box was slowly raised from its place between decks, and was in full view of the spectators. On the flooring of the box, which projected in front about one foot, stood Mr. Scott, whose hands were firmly clasped on the heavy wooden bar before Jumbo's forehead. "Be still, Jumbo," said Mr. Scott in low tones, and frequently as the elephant poked his trunk about the outside of the box. The bottom of the box was about six feet from the deck of the steam-ship, and then for the first time the spectators could fairly judge of the immense proportions of the elephant. It was admitted by all that he was taller than any of the other elephants in Mr. Barnum's herd. Jumbo's very long legs excited surprise. The box was slowly lowered to the deck of the lighter without a mishap, and the crowds on the vessels and on the piers gave three hearty cheers for Jumbo. Mr. Scott, who had accompanied him in his aerial flight, stepped from the ledge of the box on which he had been standing, and many men warmly shook his hand. Mr. Scott blushed and then looked sad. The saddle which is placed on Jumbo's back, and on which thousands of young and old have ridden, was next lowered to the lighter.

At 7 o'clock, the lighter was towed toward the Battery pier, where nearly 2,000 persons were congregated. The whistling

of ferryboats shocked Jumbo, and he bellowed furiously. Mr. Newman comforted him by patting him on the trunk with his hand and saying, "Good Jumbo." The passengers on the lighter examined the box and found scrawled with pencil on the outside expressions of endearment for Jumbo, evidently written by children in London. At the Battery pier the box was raised from the lighter. The truck with its four heavy and very small wheels was placed under it, and in the darkness and rain men set to work to get the truck in its proper place. The crowd became almost exasperated at the delay in getting this truck arranged. "Why don't they take Jumbo from the box and permit him to walk up Broadway?" was heard on all sides. Mr. Hutchinson thought that it might be safe to try this plan of moving him, but Mr. Bailey said that he would not take the risk, fearing that Jumbo might attack the crowds. Sixteen horses arrived from the Madison-Square Garden. Eight of them were attached to the truck and an attempt was made to move the box, but a like attempt to move one of the piers of the East River bridge would have been equally as successful. A long rope was attached to the forward part of the truck, and 400 or 500 men took hold and tried to assist the horses but the wheels would not revolve. At 10 o'clock it was found that some other means must be adopted, and Mr. Bailey gave an order to one of his assistants to go to the Madison-Square Garden and procure "some elephants."

While Gypsey and Chief, the proud father of the famous "baby elephant," were ambling down Broadway, the 16 horses, after numerous vain attempts, much consequent swearing among the drivers, and volumes of advice from the bystanders, suddenly, at just 11 o'clock, pulled the huge box and its contents from the rut into which it had sunk to the hard pavement. There rose a wild hurrah from the hundreds of spectators, and Jumbo trumpeted a response. Then a rumor was circulated that the box was too high to go under the elevated road, and both were measured. There was found to be two inches of space to spare, and after a long rest the 16 horses pulled their living freight up to Statestreet. At this juncture the two elephants arrived, and their keeper was much relieved to find that their services were not needed. Eight of the horses were taken off, and the strangest procession which ever passed up Broadway moved toward Madison Square Garden in the pouring rain. First came the monster box, its eight horses, driven by Johnson, "the best driver in the world." Gypsy and Chief stalked solemnly after them on either side of their keeper. Behind them followed the other eight horses, and a long, motley procession of men and women, boys and children brought up the rear. At Liberty-street, the huge wagon stuck in a pile of earth thrown up from the excavations where the steam pipes are being laid and the two elephants in the rear placed their big heads against the back of the wagon and aided the horses to start it again.

The procession then passed serenely up Broadway, with few brief stops, until between Fourth-street and Washingtonplace, when the left hind axle of the truck on which the box was placed, became hot, necessitating a halt. Water was taken from the gutters in pails, and applied to the offending axle, and after a delay of 10 minutes the horses pulled and Jumbo went forward again. Between Thirteenth and Fourteenth streets another stop was made for the same reason, and the same measures were taken. About 50 persons walked along-

side of the box between Canal-street and Union-square, and above that point, when the procession took Fourth-avenue, the number was slightly increased. Near the Lafayette statue a cab-horse took fright at the unusual sight and ran a short distance, but was promptly pulled up by his driver. Jumbo behaved well, merely trumpeting occasionally and swinging his head constantly. Above Union-square the smoke

and smell from the hot axle were very apparent. On arrival at the Madison-Square Garden two of the teams of horses were taken off and two elephants were put behind to push; but when the box was brought near the door on the Fourth-avenue end, next to Twenty-seventh-street, it was found to be too tall to enter the doorway. By pulling and pushing it was then placed against the doorway, front forward, and when The Time's reporter came away at 1:20 A.M. it stood there on the sidewalk with Jumbo in it, gazing into the scene of his future triumphs.

Jumbo is a native of Africa, and is 21 years of age. Mr. Davis, Mr. Barnum's agent, who went to London to make arrangements for Jumbo's transportation, took passage on the City of Brussels, expecting to reach this port before Jumbo's arrival, and in this happy thought made a huge mistake. The Assyrian Monarch was out 14 days. Mr. Barnum said that Jumbo grieved very much because he was forced to part from his companion, the elephant Alice, but thought that Jumbo would have plenty of elephant society in his show. A Jumbo Club was formed on board the Assyrian Monarch. Each member, according to the constitution, was required to "look as wise as an owl, as meek as a newly ordained parson, and as hypocritical as a temperance reformer." When the constitution was read to Mr. Barnum, before a large assemblage in the saloon of the steam-ship, he turned away and groaned. The assemblage roared with delight. **Bw**



A poster printed by Hatch Lithographic Co. proclaimed that Jumbo "The Children's Giant Pet" was coming soon. This is an exceptional photographic record of Barnum & London's promotion of its new featured attraction.

Richard Flint collection

article transcribed by Julie Parkinson

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